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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[CAUGHT IN THE ACT.]

MAURICE DURANT.

CHAPTER XX.

Oh, 'tis the curse in love, and well approv'd,
When women cannot love where they're belov'd.

Shakespeare.

WITH sunset ended croquet and the outdoor amusements; the band, recruited by fresh members, removed to Mr. Gregson's handsome dining-room, where a splendid repast was laid out, to which guests were thronging with an interest born of good appetites.

Sir Fielding, who had been greatly amused all the morning by watching the various groups, now filled a comfortable seat near the head of the table and commenced a conversation with a literary lion who wrote capital novels and wore a majestic mane of bright chestnut hair.

Chudleigh was seated next the Marchioness De Corby, a radiant young wife of twenty, and found his time not so fully occupied but that he could glean a moment or two to watch the bent head of Lord Crownbrilliant, which completely hid the beautiful one of Carlotta from his view. All the morning Chudleigh had been seeking that face, and now—

"Let me give you some of this pâté. I can recommend it."

"No, thank you; but I should like some salad." "Certainly." "Salad, please." "Did you win at croquet?" Of course; why do I ask? I remember seeing the Marchioness De Corby's name on the champion list at Eglinton," and so on through the whole wearisome land of small talk.

"Carlotta," whispered his lordship, "p-pledge me in a glass of Moselle. What is that s-song, 'Dwink to me only with thine eyes'? Know it? Fwetty song, s-specially the words 'Come, you must take a good sip'—and he filled her glass—"and say after me 'I pledge you, Carlotta'—no, not Carlotta; I say that, but C-Clawence. Clawence is my name, you know—one of them, that is. I've m-more than half a dozen, he! he! Now t-then, I p-pledge you, Carlotta," he whispered, raising his glass and smiling at her with a victorious flush on his carefully preserved cheek;

and she for the first time lifted her glass and her eyes, which met the stern, sorrowful regard of the dark, pained ones opposite.

"No, no," she whispered, almost hoarsely, setting the delicate glass down again, "I cannot drink now."

"All wight," replied his lordship, cheerfully, though looking slightly disappointed. "It's a bore dinking when you're not thirsty," but he, it is to be presumed, was thirsty, for he emptied his glass.

At the head of the table Mr. Gregson discussed politics with two advanced Liberal lords, and was good enough to lower his voice and his sentiments so that he was not quite unbearable.

Miss Bella was placed next the dissipated marquise, and was discovering that their tastes agreed on every point—croquet, waltzing, dance music, and Fechter's acting—so it is to be inferred that she was content.

Her sister had taken a boy lord in tow and was making careful play. Both, to use a sporting phrase, were "running well," as Mrs. Gregson smilingly noted from her post beside an aged peer, slightly deaf and very fidgety, who had sworn at one of the servants and broken two of the best glasses.

Maud sat listening to a discourse on the poetry of the last Academy pictures, delivered by Cecil Gerlaise—listening gratefully and with a light in her lovely eyes that the young artist felt repaid him all his eloquence while it tortured him with its beauty—tortured him because he knew he was powerless, clever artist though he was, to reproduce even the shadow of it.

The rest of the illustrious company ate, drank, talked politics, intrigued, and flirted according to their several inclinations, and found every facility for doing each and all.

Dinner over the ladies retired to the drawing-room to gaze at the proscenium of the little theatre and wonder if the actors would be punctual.

Carlotta sank into an ottoman behind a window curtain and looked out upon the lawn with thoughtful eyes. Maud, who had been seeking her all the morning, caught the glitter of the white dress and went over to her.

"Carlotta, where have you been hiding all the morning?" she said, sinking on to a low seat at her feet, and looking up lovingly into the dark, impenetrable eyes.

"Hiding!" repeated Carlotta, shrinking from her touch, yet summoning a smile to her cold face. "Hiding? Nowhere. I have seen you once or twice. There are so many people here."

"Yes, are there not? and they seem so happy and amused. Are you enjoying yourself?"

Carlotta started and looked at her scrutinizingly. Was she showing the storm of agony that was raging within?

"Enjoying myself, dear Maud? Of course. Are not you?"

"Oh, yes," replied the gentle girl, sighing at the almost harsh tone of the other. "Oh, yes; all are so kind and so clever. Here is Miss Gregson."

"Now, Miss Chichester, I have come to implore you to play for us. Pray do not say no."

Gentle Maud rose without a word, and Carlotta, shrinking behind the curtain, was left to her own black thoughts.

"Sir Fielding, have you heard that Mr. Townley, your Member for Annleigh, is very ill?" asked the Honourable Mr. Howard, holding his glass for some wine.

"Yes," said Sir Fielding, "and I was very sorry to hear it. This morning I sent my man over to inquire how he was progressing, but he had not returned when I left."

"My man caught me on the road," said Mr. Howard. "I regret to say that Mr. Townley has suffered a relapse."

"Dear me," said Sir Fielding, pityingly. "I hope—"

"Ah, so do I," rejoined the Honourable, while two or three others echoed him. "Things are critical now, very; and we could not afford to lose the seat."

The Honourable Mr. Howard was a Tory.

"Should we lose it?" asked Chudleigh, gravely.

Mr. Howard shook his head seriously.

"The other side are strong," he said, in a medita-

tive voice, "and pushing. The working-man movement has lifted them miles, and certainly I should be doubtful."

Sir Fielding glanced at Mr. Gregson and saw that gentleman flash up.

"You need not be doubtful, Mr. Howard," he cried, in a triumphant voice, yet with just enough of respect in it to keep it from being offensive. "You would be sure to lose it. Warrington, the factory town, is incorporated with Annaleigh now, you know, and our interest there is strong."

"I was thinking of that," said Mr. Howard, smiling. "But be not too confident, Mr. Gregson; we fight hard, you know."

Mr. Gregson laughed heartily, but there was a malicious twinkle in his eye.

"It's a foregone conclusion," he said.

"We shall see," replied Mr. Howard, gravely.

"Mr. Townley is not dead yet," said Sir Fielding, gently, and the others chuckled.

"And I hope he won't die," exclaimed Mr. Gregson, honestly. "I'd rather lose the seat than a neighbour."

This lucky speech set the company straight again, and Chudleigh seized the slight pause to introduce the hunting topic, knowing that the people round him were always willing to hunt the fox, whether the ground were a rough bit of country or a shining mahogany table.

When the gentlemen reached the drawing-room the actors had arrived and the band had commenced the overture.

Seated in comfortable chairs and lounges ranged in the form of an auditorium the company thoroughly enjoyed both the rest and the farces, and when the curtain fell every one applauded most heartily.

Mr. Gregson looked delighted as the Marquis Lantry exclaimed, in a voice loud enough to be heard by every one in the room:

"Glorious! I never enjoyed anything so much in my life!" and a universal murmur of appreciation rose from the rest.

"They have played well," assented Mr. Gregson, with smiling self-satisfaction. "I am glad I thought of theatricals."

"A most happy idea," said Sir Fielding. "Ah, here they come before the curtain," and he joined in the plaudits.

"Now," said Mrs. Gregson, in an audible whisper to the ladies, as the lights were turned up, "I dare say they have covered the lawn in; let us go and see."

With surprise every one followed her out of the room, and walking on to the terrace was astonished to find an enormous marquee erected on the lawn.

"A ball!" exclaimed the Honourable Miss Cornthwaite.

"Only a simple dance or two," smirked Miss Lavinia.

And in an instant the ladies had retired to rearrange their hair, deck themselves with flowers, and make other Terpsichorean preparations.

Smooth as velvet, the lawn was no more unpleasant to dance upon than a carpet, while the fresh summer air that stole through the crevices of the gaudy tent kept the spirits elevated and made it impossible for any one to feel weary.

The croquet, the dinner, and the theatricals had been a success, and now the ball promised to be a crowning triumph.

Chudleigh, who had danced the first quadrille with the little maiden who had been taking lessons in archery from him during the morning, found himself marvelling at the high spirits and astonishing gaiety of every one around him, forgetting that not every one was like himself troubled with the heart-ache.

Once or twice he caught sight of Carlotta; both times she was dancing with Lord Crownbrilliant, and he had longed to leave the scene which brought him nothing but pain, but he had resolved to play the man and see the night out, so he stayed.

"Won't you have some wine, Mr. Chichester?" asked Tom Gregson, coming to him where he was lounging against one of the poles. "Come along. There's a dance of a crush, but we can get through it."

And Chudleigh, who no more wanted wine than he did a washing-tub, consented to be shown a particular corner of the long table where he could secure some wine quietly.

"I mustn't stay," said Tom, looking particularly happy; "Miss Chichester has been kind enough to give me the next dance."

"Off with you then," said Chudleigh, with assumed gaiety, and Tom hurried away.

The next was a waltz, and Chudleigh, hoping to lose something of his pain by a course of twirling, looked round for a partner.

"Will you give me this?" he said to Mrs. Vavasour.

"With pleasure, Mr. Chichester," said that lady.

"I could not refuse so old a friend."

"Nor so true a one," said Chudleigh, with a touch of his father's courtliness, and he led her off.

"Thanks, thanks," she breathed, when they had been whirling for some little while. "I have enjoyed that so much. You have my very step. Tell me, Mr. Chudleigh, why do you not dance more?"

"I am getting an old man," said Chudleigh, with a smile that was not altogether a merry one.

The worldly beauty tapped him with her fan.

"That's a tacit reproach for me," she said, with a bewitching smile. "Get me an ice, then you shall sit down."

Chudleigh got the ice and sank down into the seat beside her.

"What a number of people are here!" she said. "They have the pick of the county. Well, they deserve it, for I never knew anything better done."

"Capitally managed," assented Chudleigh—"everybody enjoying themselves immensely."

"Excepting Mr. Chudleigh Chichester," thought the lady, then aloud she said, "Do you know Miss Lawley? Lawley, isn't it—the lady in the white dress, with young Carabrook? Lord Crownbrilliant is looking at her—see?"

For Chudleigh had seemed slow in picking out the young lady alluded to.

"Oh, yes," he said, indifferently, "very well."

"She is very nice, is she not?" asked Mrs. Vavasour.

"Very," said Chudleigh, almost bitterly.

"I thought so," replied Mrs. Vavasour. "One can always tell by a face. She flirts though, I am afraid. I have seen her with Lord Crownbrilliant in the true coquette style. Ah, here is my next partner. My shawl—thanks."

Chudleigh could endure it no longer, and, parting the curtains of the tent, stepped into the open air, followed by a burst of music and the ripple and buzz of laughter.

"How much longer?" he muttered, pulling out his watch. "I have vowed to stop it through, or I would go. I would rather die a thousand times than stand by and watch her play with that idiot. Was it necessary to bracken it out so to set the whole room agape? Oh, Carlotta, Carlotta!"

As the words were wrung from him in his agony he fell into a rustic seat and hid his face in his hands.

The rustle of a dress startled him, and looking up he saw the woman he was calling upon come into the starlight.

In the dimness he could see that her face was white and that her hand was pressed against her heart.

In a second his anger and bitterness had gone and with all his love in his voice he murmured her name and strode towards her.

She started, and with a suppressed murmur turned her face towards him.

"Carlotta!" he breathed, huskily, "why do you shun me? At least you might have some pity—"

"Pity!" she murmured, vacantly, staring at him with strained eyes.

"Yes, pity on me and yourself," he repeated, stretching out his hand to take her arm.

But she shrank back, and with a shudder of horror cried, piteously:

"Don't touch me—don't touch me!"

His heart seemed to die out in his bosom, and, pressing his hand to his forehead, he said, brokenly:

"Carlotta, is it—"

"Too late—too late!" she moaned, covering her face with her quivering hands. "I am his!"

Chudleigh lifted his hands with a gesture of despair and entreaty as a groan broke from his lips.

She was moved at the signs of his agony almost to madness; she caught at his clenched hand, but the next moment a man's figure came from the tent, and Lord Crownbrilliant's voice thick with wine and excitement cried:

"C-Carlotta, I s-say, you promised me this last d-dance."

And the bent form raised itself to its full height as the beautiful voice—with a calmness that must have cost its owner untold agony—replied:

"And here I am, my lord—I never break my word."

CHAPTER XXI.

Love sought is good, but given unsought is better.

Shakespeare.

"You both seem worn out," said Sir Fielding, leaning back amongst the cushions of the carriage as it sped towards the Hall, and stroking Maud's hand, which rested on his knee.

"I am rather tired," replied Maud, "and I am so glad they did not keep it up very late, although I have enjoyed myself much."

"It has been a long day," said Chudleigh, curtly, his head bowed upon his breast.

"A very successful one too," said Sir Fielding. "I am very glad. Gregson is a very worthy man—very. Heigh-ho!" yawning, "I am sleepy. Ah! what's

that?" he added, quickly, as the carriage was brought to a sudden stop, and the horses' hoofs could be heard stamping on the road.

Chudleigh opened the door and leapt out.

"What is the matter, Watson?" he asked of the coachman.

"I don't exactly know, sir," replied Watson. "The near horse started at something; indeed, they both seemed skereed."

"Frightened? Did you see or hear something?" asked Chudleigh, listening himself.

"No-o. I fancied I saw something strike across the road, but I'm not sure, sir," replied Watson, whose vision was slightly affected by champagne and port from the servants' hall.

"Poachers," said Chudleigh, wearily, returning to the carriage. "Drive on, Watson."

And the horses, after a little rearing, trotted off again.

It was about three o'clock when Maud stood at her chamber door with her tiny flagstaff candlestick in her hand, and kissed Sir Fielding and Chudleigh.

"Good-night, dear Chud. I am not at all sleepy nor tired, but you look worn out."

"I am tired," said Chudleigh, avoiding her eyes.

"Good-night, Maudie."

And taking her lovely face in his hands he kissed her forehead and strode off to his own room.

"Poor Chud," murmured Maud, lovingly. "If I were Carlotta I think I could not help loving him."

Then she sighed herself, and, sitting before her glass, covered her face with her hands.

"I wish I felt fired," she murmured. "I shall not sleep for thinking. How glad I am to be at home alone again. I like to be alone—why, I wonder? Because when all is quiet I think of the soft, sweet music, and can see the grand, beautiful face!"

And, sighing, she unlocked the diamond clasp on her door, and let her hair fall in a glorious shower on her ivory shoulders.

As she did so she looked down and raised a little diamond cross that should have hung on her bosom.

"My cross!" she cried. "Papa's last gift! Oh, dear, what shall I do? Let me think. I had it when I started; it was safe when I was in the carriage, for I remember seeing it when I threw open my cloak for air. I must have dropped it on the stairs or in the room."

Then she looked round the floor, and about her feet, but could not see it.

"It must be on the stairs," she thought. "I wonder if I am brave enough to creep down and find it?"

After a moment's hesitation she took her candlestick, and, holding it above her head, softly opened the door and stole out on to the corridor.

Stair by stair she searched, but in vain, and when she had examined the long hall where she had walked, and reached the door, she felt convinced that the trinket had dropped from her neck when she alighted from the carriage.

"Papa's present," she murmured, gazing at the huge door wistfully. "I do not like to lose it, and I am sure it is lying on the steps. I wonder if I could unfasten the door? No—it is too heavy! Wait. If I am brave enough I could undo the drawing-room window, and walk round! Oh, no, no! I am afraid! But papa's present! I will do it."

And, nerving herself to a pitch of courage that astonished her, she drew the sliver cloak round her head and stole into the drawing-room.

It required a continual repetition of "Papa's present" to keep her to her purpose, and her heart nearly stopped beating as the window creaked on its hinges and she stepped out into the night.

But the cool, fresh air sent a thrill of pleasure and renewed courage through her frame, and she ran lightly round to the front, by the grim lions that stood rampant on the huge marble slabs, and stooped down to search for the cross.

"Ah! here it is. I knew it would be here!" she exclaimed as she saw the glittering bauble lying at the foot of the stone steps, and she sprang towards it.

At the moment her fingers touched it a burst of the low, sad music that she knew so well broke out upon the air and floated towards her, and, pressing her hand to her bosom, she started to her feet, gazing in the direction from which it came with white cheeks and frightened eyes.

"He is here! here! He will see me!" she thought, and tried to dart away, but her feet seemed chained to the ground, powerless to move.

In two minutes the feeling of fear had given way to that of delight, the subtle melody was stealing over her senses.

"Near!" she murmured, through her parted lips. "Near! how near! It seems to call me. Does it, I wonder? If so, I must go!" and she commenced trembling.

The music grew more distinct.

To her ear it assumed a voice calling, commanding her.

Slowly she stretched forth her hands and, with every appearance of a somnambulist, moved quietly, slowly in the direction of the wood.

Suddenly the music ceased, and with it the trance, if trance it was.

With a cry of love, alarm, surprise, all mingled, she stood still and tremblingly wondered how she could get back.

While she stood so a sound broke upon her ear, and sent the blood to her heart in a rushing stream. It was a groan.

Whose?

Whose else but the being's who had summoned her by the heavenly music?

Casting off all fear, she sprang into the wood, her shining hair half escaping the silken hood, and falling in a sheen down her back.

Guided almost by instinct she threaded the thick trees, and with a sudden cry fell on her knees beside the still figure of a man stretched upon the bright, mossy grass.

"It is he!" she moaned, bending over the grand, uplifted face of Maurice Durant, white, deathlike and set. "He is dead. No, no. Oh, dear! oh, dear! what shall I do? He may die! and she throw her arms round him, as if by so doing she could hold him to life.

Then with her hair falling in a flood upon her bosom, her agonized eyes, soft and luminous with the divinity of love, fixed upon his closed eyelids, her lips parted and letting the breath through in quick, noiseless, terrified gasps, she remained for a minute, then she shrank back, murmuring:

"If he recovers he may be angry with me, may hurt me!" and, oh, marvellous mystery of love, a thrill of delight ran through her at the thought of being in his hands even though they clasped her in anger. "He may kill me. What shall I do? Oh, Maud, Maud, courage! Water! where is the stream?"

Quick as lightning she sprang to her feet and caught up the rough cap lying beside him, then ran to the stream; in a minute more she was bending over him, moistening his dry, hot lips and cooling his forehead, her fingers lingering each moment with a timid caress.

While she did this in the pale light of the stars the bushes behind her parted noiselessly, and a man's head was thrust forward.

As its dark, flashing eyes rested upon the two silent forms they lit up with a blaze of savage gloom, and a tawny, sunburnt hand was dashed against the full-lipped mouth to prevent the cry which the watcher in his joy almost uttered.

For two minutes he stood thus, drinking in the scene, then with a fiendish smile upon his sallow face he stole like an Indian from the spot.

At a hundred yards' distance he passed, and, throwing up his hand, muttered:

"Am I dreaming? Am I mad, or have I found him again? Oh, ye saints, or fiends, how ye do befriended Spazzola. Found him again when all hope was gone, found him, and how? Who is the beautiful girl, his light-o'-love? No—he has no light-o'-loves. Ah! I have it. Spazzola, your fortune is made—thank the girl for it. Oh, ye fiends, smile on, keep the luck with Spazzola still, and he is made," and muttering huskily with a savage joy in his leopard eyes he crept on.

At the fringe of the wood he stopped and imitated the cry of the cuckoo.

It was echoed once, twice, then three men came forward stealthily and soft-footed, like panthers.

"Well?" asked the first, the thick-set ruffian we have seen in the public-house at Hatton Garden, "well?"

"No avall, mio amico! The house is bare and naked. Everything gone but a dog!"

He shuddered.

"What! a bloodhound?" asked the Englishman, in a tone of disgust.

"Ay, a bloodhound. Bah! I think I feel his fangs at my throat now."

With a thrill of horror the three men shook their heads.

"Confound it!" growled the man called Bill. "I ate a bloodhound, and I ain't a goul' in for one. Look here, this crib's no go."

Spazzola shook his head decisively.

"We're agreed on that. Well, let's go in for the other."

"Soh! it is done!" said the Italian.

"No, it ain't, not nearly," returned Bill, in a tone of contempt, not understanding the Italian's peculiar mode of expressing himself. "You talk as if cracking a crib were as easy as fly-faking. You don't know anything about the business. Leave this job to me; wait about the crib so as to bear a hand if anything goes wrong, and I'll share like and like, sweep me never!"

Nodding their dark heads assentingly, the three Italians dropped on their hands and knees to follow

the English burglar, Spazzola looking back over his shoulder with a gleaming eye at the dark outline of the desolate Rectory.

Maud, watching the still, white face with its heavy lines drawn by the hands of sorrow and privation, saw, after she had bathed the cold forehead, which was as white as her own, the lips move with an expression of consciousness. Shrieking back with a feeling of thankfulness not unmixed with alarm, she waited for some other sign of returning life.

It came. Raising his hand to his head, Maurice Durant felt the water upon his brow, opened his eyes, and, seeing a figure kneeling beside him, sprang to his feet with a fierce scowl.

Maud shrank back trembling, expecting he would clutch her by the throat as she had heard he had grasped the posoher, and when Maurice bent his head down and seized her arm she uttered a piteous little cry and fell against his knees.

Her hand dropped as from a snake, and, recoiling with a startled look, he said:

"Who is it? Not—"

"Yes, I—Maud," she sobbed, in an agony of emotion. "You will not hurt me. I—I found you lying on the ground—dying I thought. I knew you would be angry if I stayed, but—but, I couldn't leave you there, lying all alone, so I—"

His head dropped upon his bosom and he passed his hand across his brow with a groan.

"You should not have touched me," he said, in a low, ringing voice. "I have been ill—I am seized sometimes. Have you been here long, senora?"

Maud started, and, looking, saw that his eyes were still dim and half unconscious.

"Not long," she murmured, tremblingly. "You are still weak; will you not lean against the tree?"

"Weak!" he said, starting and looking down at the violin, which lay near the spot on which he had fallen. "Ah! I remember. Where is Tigris—I bid him guard the house—and you—how came you here?"

"I—"

"I—"

How could she tell him that his music had drawn her thither?

With a quick look that told her he had read her thoughts he said:

"It is late. You should not be here. The brambles have torn your dress, your hands are scratched too. Come."

He turned to go.

Not one word of thanks had he uttered. She noticed it even as she turned to follow him, but thought nothing strange in the omission. All he did or left undone seemed best.

They went on a dozen yards, he brushing away and breaking down the tanglewood at each step, then he turned his head.

"You are tired," he said, with a sweet, grave smile that lit up his features till they became transformed. "I will carry you."

She shrank back, but his outstretched arms clasped her round as if she was a new-born babe, and, giving herself up to the maddening delight that filled her soul, she, with a sigh and the quiver of an antean leaf, nestled against his breast, her head dropping on to his shoulder.

Silently he strode on, crushing the undergrowth beneath his heel, his hair blown now and again across her cheek, his breath fanning her bare arm, then when the terrace glimmered in front he knelt down and with ineffable grace and tenderness set her on the ground.

Her hand lingered round his neck with a caress which struggle as she might she could not repress. Opening her lips she breathed as one breathes when waking from a long sleep of delicious dreams.

With his keen, dark eyes fixed upon her face, and reading it as clearly as one reads an open book, he shook for one instant as he saw the look, then, gathering himself together with the shake of a lion or his own dog, said, almost sternly:

"You are safe, child. I will watch you until you enter the house. Go, and visit not the wood at night again."

Fixing her eyes eagerly on his face as if anxious not to lose a single word he spoke, she quailed at his harsh tone, then, lowering her head upon her bosom, turned, and without a word glided across the lawn.

He stood watching her girlish figure until it had disappeared into the house.

Then with his lips closed tightly, as if to stifle the passion at his heart, he strode back into the wood.

CHAPTER XXII.

Courage mounteth with occasion. *Shakespeare.*

THAT night, or rather morning, was an eventful one to more than the strange rector and gentle Maud. Carlotta, white-faced and heavy-eyed, had retired to her room after seeing Lady Mildred comfortably ensconced in bed, and, receiving tidings from her lady-

ship's kindly lips, felt as little inclined for sleep as the sweet girl in the chamber in the Hall, but, unlike her, could not sit serenely before her mirror.

Cloeping her white hands in front of her, and throwing her majestic head back till the veins stood out in little blue threads in her splendid throat, she seemed gasping for air—for very life—while her rigid lips murmured in broken accents, that fell like icicles snapt from excess of cold:

"Too late, too late! Sold! Oh, Heaven, give me strength to bear it. Give him strength to hate me. How he looked! I shall see his eyes all the hours of the night, feel his hands, clenched and stony, beating against my heart. Yet I have kept my vow. I have done right. Right? Have I? Suppose—suppose, after all, the money, the dress, should turn to bitter apples and Dead Sea fruit? Suppose I have wrecked his and my own life for naught? No, no; I will not think of it. I know that poverty must mean misery. I know that wealth, place, rank, mean power and happiness! Happiness—oh, Chudleigh, noble Chudleigh! Will your hand never clasp mine again with the grasp of love? Will your eyes never meet mine again, save with the agony of reproach? Will you—Hush! hush! Am I an idiot, a brainless school-girl, that I talk this balderdash? Enough, enough. I, Carlotta Lawley, penniless daughter of a penniless man—adventurer—have sworn to win rank and wealth for my mate, and I have done so. What matters the pain of the game? No battle is gained without bloodshed, no game won but some must lose," and she sank upon the bed and lowered her head upon her hands. "Let me think. To-morrow he will be here to tell Lady Mildred; the next day and the news will be in every gossip's mouth. I must play my part—I must! More, I will! There shall be no dishonesty. He shall have myself, my obedience, everything save my love."

For half an hour she remained thus motionless, drowsy with the stupor of despair and an aching heart, when suddenly her acute ears detected a grating noise in the adjoining room which served the purposes of a boudoir and safe room. In it Lady Mildred's and her own few jewels were kept.

For the moment she thought nothing of the noise and dropped her weary head into its old position, but after a slight pause it came again, this time in the form of a rattling, and, now thoroughly aroused and suspicious, she rose and, gliding to the door, listened intently.

"Some one has broken into the house," she murmured. "Some one is trying the window!"

For a moment her heart beat with a wild terror, but the next a feeling of almost savage delight ran through her, and with tightly compressed lips and glittering eyes she plucked off her slippers, gathered her dress around her, and softly opened the door.

Pausing to let the slight sound of the creaking door die away, until she heard the unmistakable click of an opened window, the brave girl, strung up to an unnatural calm by excitement, stole along the slight strip of passage that intervened between the two rooms and reached the door of the room whence the noise came.

It was ajar. Deliberately pushing it open far enough to admit her, she entered and saw the figure of a man, dressed in a fustian suit with heavy boots swathed with folds of list, a ragged fur cap upon his head and a piece of black crape covering the upper part of his face.

He was bending down before a pretty toy cabinet, trying one of the doors with a small bar of iron by the light of a dark lantern.

By his side lay a pistol—not the first Carlotta Lawley had seen by very many. It was cocked and, as she felt assured, was loaded.

On the ledge of the open window were two grappling hooks attached to a ladder of slight rope by which the burglar had ascended.

Although it has taken some minutes to describe the position of affairs, Carlotta's keen eyes took it in in a moment and in another had determined what to do.

Springing to the window, she unfastened the grappling irons and heard the ladder fall to the ground, then, turning, faced the burglar, who with a fearful imprecation ground out from beneath his teeth had leapt to his muffled feet.

"Only speak a word or screech and I'll shoot you, hang me if I don't," he croaked, hoarsely.

"I don't intend to," she said—"that is, at least, if I do not change my mind. You can fire if you like. The consequences are very easily told. The house would be alarmed—it is waiting now for my signal; the ladder has gone, escape would be out of the question."

Bill the burglar stared in amazement; his keen brain had taken in the sense and truth of her words at once.

Lowering his pistol, he said, huskily:

"Well, you are a cool 'un, miss," and there was a tone of admiration in his words and a light in his eyes that made the beauty almost smile. "Praps you'll tell me what you're goin' to do?" he growled, fingering the pistol but not offering to raise it again.

"That depends upon what you have done," said Carlotta. "Have you injured that cabinet?"

Bill stared. It was getting too hot. This woman whom he could have strangled with a clutch of his dirty hands, or shot by a curl of his strong finger, was beating him at his own game! How beautiful she looked too! He was beginning to feel ashamed of himself, and with a shake like a dog advanced a step.

"No foolery," he croaked, "I'm not a goin' to stand it. Got out o' the way, and let me take the swag, or—" and he raised the pistol again.

Carlotta stretched out her hand, and caught the bell rope.

"Ah, you want me to ring, I see," she said, feeling her courage fast ebbing away, yet all the more determined that he should not see it.

"No—no!" cried the man. I—"

"Stand back then, and put down that pistol!" said Carlotta, in a firm voice of command.

Bill hesitated for a second, then, with an emphatic consignment of her eyes and limbs to a warm climate, laid the pistol on the table.

"There!"

"Now," said Carlotta, at that moment noticing a jewel box lying on the floor, with its lid torn open and sides broken in. "Now pick up that box, and put back the things you have taken from it."

Bill the burglar eyed her for a moment with sullen eyes, but a movement of the hand which held the bell rope decided him.

Slowly he picked up the box, and, unbuttoning his coat pocket, noiselessly plucked forth, as if he were plucking out his heart, the heap of glittering gems.

"Have you anything else?" asked Carlotta, sternly.

"No," snarled the man.

"Very well," rejoined Carlotta. "Now then, there is a five-pound note; take it and go. If it is any use I'll ask you to repay me for saving you from transportation by trying—trying, mark me—an honest life, but I'm afraid it would be waste of words and time. Take the note and go."

And she held the crisp piece of paper towards him. The man stood stock still, and gazed at her as if he doubted his senses.

"Is it all square?" he gasped.

"I do not understand you," said Carlotta, calmly. "If you mean am I playing you false you know I am not; I could have done it long ago had I wished. Take this and go; I cannot answer for their waiting much longer."

Bill came forward and took off his cap; it was thoughtlessly done, and he paid for his compelled reverence, for with the cap off tumbled the mask.

"Ah!" he cried, his disclosed face turning white. "You'll know me—you'll split upon me."

"Another word like that and I ring," said Carlotta. "I have given you my promise that you shall go unharmed, and I shall keep it."

"You're a lady, a queen, 'ang me!" cried the man, with enthusiastic admiration. "Miss, I wouldn't touch a hair of yer head, I never meant to, swelp me. Put the note away, chuck it in the fire, I won't touch it—Well, if yer insists upon it I will, but I swear I'll keep it as a token of this 'ere night and you, miss; and if ever you should want a friend to give you a hand in anything of this sort or leastways anything rough and ready, I'm your man, swelp me. Ask for Cribby Bill at the 'Spotted Calf,' Whitechapel, and you'll soon hear o' me. Good-bye, miss; I can manage to get down by the winder, no matter if I do break my neck; good-bye, miss, and Heaven bless yer."

Thus saying, and without adding the authority for his belief that he had a right to command the benediction, the bullet head of Cribby Bill disappeared beneath the ledge, and Carlotta fell in a half-swoon against the cabinet she had so bravely protected, murmuring:

"Thank Heaven! if it had not have been for this I should have gone mad!"

(To be continued.)

THE PRINCE CONSORT MEMORIAL CHAPEL AT WINDSOR CASTLE.—The work of fixing the handsome sarcophagus, designed by Baron Triqueti, which is to bear the recumbent effigy of the Prince Consort, has been finished. The work has occupied a considerable time, the cases containing the various portions having arrived some weeks ago. It occupies a position in the nave of the chapel a few yards in front of the altar, and is an imposing and magnificent work of art, forming a most striking feature in the memorial chapel. The sarcophagus is supported by an angel at each of the four corners.

Those at the head bear each a shield, one representing the arms of the Queen, and the other those of the Prince. The angels at the opposite end are represented as mourning. There are three ogives on each side, and one at the head and foot. In the ogives on the south side are figures representing Charity and Science, the centre one having an angel bearing a shield with the words—"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course"—2nd Timothy, iv. 7. On the north side the figures represent Truth and Justice, the centre ogive containing an angel with a shield, and the same inscription on the other side. The ogive at the foot contains a figure of the Queen in the attitude of prayer, and that at the head contains a figure of Science weeping. Around the upper part the sarcophagus is richly ornamented with various leaves. The cenotaph is made of several kinds of marble; the top slab upon which the recumbent effigy of the Prince is to rest is of Pyrenean black and white marble. The basels of black and gold Sicilian marble. The angels at the four corners are of Sicilian marble, all the other figures being of statuary marble. The effigy of the Prince will not arrive in England until May next.

TOIL.

SPEAK, ye heroes, who, like planets,
Burn along the heaven of fame;
How have you attained the glory
That adorns each cherished name?
Let the ages, which have never
Made these deathless names their spoil,
Let the conquered ones answer,
'Twas by steady, honest toil!
Yonder oak-tree, upward flinging
Worlds of branches to the sky,
Did not in a single instant
Spread so far or soar so high.
Petty deeds and feeble efforts
Weedlike spring from every soil;
Greatness, like the forest monarch,
Only grows from time and toil.
Toil, my brother, never falter!
Though the clouds may veil thy way;
When thy feet have reached the summit
Then time eyes shall see the day.
And the clouds shall lie below thee,
Harmless then their stormy coil;
And the sun shall beam above thee;
Toil, my brother, ever toil.

E. B.

SCIENCE.

AN ARMY TAILOR.—An American paper states that an eminent New York tailor is engaged in perfecting a new style of bullet-proof garment.

A NOVELTY IN GAS.—A novelty in gas has recently been introduced by Messrs. Verity Brothers. It consists of a patent day burner for gas fires. It can easily be fitted to stove or grate, either by plumber, smith, or gasfitter, and without alterations of any kind; it is covered with indestructible fuel and looks like a coal fire, giving out great heat; it burns on the atmospheric principle, viz., consuming air and gas combined, and is without smoke, smell, or dust; it is also a great convenience where uniform heat is required.

"TINNING" BY ELECTRICITY.—A new and important process of "tinning" by electricity has been brought into successful operation in Birmingham. By this process any metal, it appears, but zinc, can be coated with a very white metal of great brilliancy, of which tin forms the principal element. The precipitation is effected as in the electrotype process. It is the intention of the company to tin in this way plates of iron and steel, and to use it as the layer upon which silver may be deposited, so that in ornamental articles, if the silver wear off, a pure white surface shall still be presented to the eye.

THE OXYHYDRIC LIGHT.—The oxyhydric light has not proved a success in Paris, and it has been discontinued in the public lamps on the Boulevard des Italiens. It is not generally known that a carbureting apparatus is always employed in conjunction with oxygen, which adds to the complication of the apparatus as well as the cost of the light. There are but few who will consent to have installed in their houses two meters, two regulators, a carburetor, and two distinct systems of pipes. For this reason alone the system was certain to fail, even if the alleged economy were proved, which has never been the case.

IMPRESSION OF A LEPIDOPTEROUS WING.—A contemporary writes:—Mr. Edward Charlesworth, the well-known geologist, has recently brought to light a remarkable perfect impression of a lepidop-

terous wing from the Stonesfield slate. Mr. Butler, of the zoological department, British Museum, pronounces it to be a butterfly of the sub-family Brassoline (Fam. Nymphalidae), and allied to the recent tropical American genera Caligo, Dasyophthalma, and Brassolia. This fossil is especially interesting from its great antiquity, the oldest butterfly previously described having been discovered in the cretaceous series; it belongs, notwithstanding, to the highest family of butterflies, and therefore throws back the date of the origin of this sub-order farther than had ever been dreamed of by the most sanguine.

NOVEL USE FOR A BALLOON.—Mr. Samuel A. King, the well-known Boston aeronaut, was recently employed upon a novel commission, that of measuring with balloons the discharge from a gas well in Ontario county, New York. The well is owned by a company of capitalists, and the gas is conveyed in pipes to Rochester, twenty-six miles distant, and there mixed with the street or illuminating gas. The flowage reached only 25,000 feet a day, when the capacity was estimated at 800,000. With two balloons, one of 20,000 cubic feet, and the other of 13,000, the exact capacity of which was previously ascertained to a nicety, Mr. King measured the flow for a certain period, and the result showed that the flow was about 4,000 feet per hour. Much of the gas is thought to escape by leakage from the pipes between Bloomfield and Rochester. In accordance with Mr. King's suggestions, the company propose to perfect the present drill hole and sink another near the first. The gas was discovered many years since while parties were boring for oil, and when it first escaped the tools were driven out.

A CHEAP FIREPROOF SAFE. Sink a well, six or eight feet deep in the basement, and place in it a round or square boiler tube, which should rise a little above the surface. In this tube place another a little smaller and shorter, so that there will be a space (at least two inches all round) between the two. Close the inner tube with a watertight door packed with a soft rubber ring and let water fill the space and flow over the inner tube. Let there be an inch pipe from the bottom of the inner tube, leading under the walls of the building and rising out of the ground. The external end of the pipe will serve to admit air to the inner tube, and should be covered to prevent the admission of dust. Let a waste pipe lead from the top of the outer tube, and arrange a cock so that the water over the tube of the inner tube may be drawn off. Fix two guide rods to the inner tube, and let an elevator with shelves pass up and down the rods to lower your books into the well. The elevator when loaded can be counterbalanced with a weight. When you have placed your books on the shelves and lowered them into the well, close the door and let the water flow in till the whole is covered. As long as there is water in the outer tube, the inner one cannot become hotter than 212 degrees. It will be easy to arrange so that the water can be turned on or let off without descending to the basement.

SOLDERING IRON AND STEEL.

Dr. Sieburger publishes the following methods for soldering iron and steel:

If large and thick pieces of iron and steel are to be joined, sheet copper or brass is placed between the perfectly clean surfaces to be united, which are then tightly wired together. The joint is covered with wet clay free from sand, and dried slowly near the fire. When the mud is dry, the joint is heated by a blast to a white heat and cooled, suddenly if iron, slowly if steel. When brass is used, it requires less heat, of course, than copper.

For objects of moderate size, hard brass solder is made by fusing together 8 parts of brass and 1 part of tin. Soft brass solder is composed of 6 parts brass, 1 part zinc, and 1 part tin.

For soldering small iron or steel articles, a hard silver solder composed of equal parts of fine silver and malleable brass is used, the mass being protected by borax. Soft silver solder differs from this only in the addition of one sixteenth part tin.

Very fine and delicate articles are soldered either with pure gold, or a gold solder composed of 1 part gold, 2 parts silver, 3 parts copper.

For the first time since the death of the late Prince Consort the military bands were allowed to play at the garrison, Chatham, on the 14th ult., the anniversary of the death of his Royal Highness, all military music on that day having previously been prohibited.

THE return of Fine Art sales in last year's International Exhibition, registered through the official price clerks, has been published as amounting to 10,000. This, however, does not include what was effected through the French and Belgian Commissions, or privately by artists. The total amount of sales is estimated as amounting to over 30,000.



[GOOD NIGHT.]

THE SECRET OF SCHWARZENBURG.

CHAPTER XXIV.

How wondrous few, by avarice uncontrolled,
Have virtue to subdue the thirst for gold.

Brooms.

THE short subterranean passage through which the frightened maidens followed Robinson's lead and Stephano's insensible figure had evidently been excavated by artificial means, but the long walled way into which it led was simply a natural gully, the old bed by which some rushing body of water in other times had found its way to the sea. Great rocks piled up on either side as completely screened any passers through this natural road as if it had been roofed, but it was a relief for them to see the sky once more, and Serena looked up thither, an earnest petition for help in her beautiful eyes, and a calm, trustful smile on her lips. Leina looked at her wistfully and with a sort of awe as at some superior being, but clung the more closely to her arm.

Then came another short excavation, all traces of which were evidently carefully concealed, and next they emerged through a rude doorway into the cellar of some house. Not a word was spoken until the whole party had mounted the stairs and arrived at a small, barren-looking, but decently furnished room.

The two ruffians dropped their burden with a muttered anathema, and Robinson exclaimed, jubilantly: "Well, here we are at last. So far so good."

Then turning round, with a mocking bow, he said, gaily:

"Welcome to the Haunted Castle, young women. If there's anything I can do to serve you, only name it."

"I should like a glass of water," said Serena, calmly, while Leina stamped her foot angrily and dashed off the flood of tears that poured over her cheeks.

"There's plenty in the barrel. If we had only been sure of ladies' company we would have had it fed."

Robinson's accomplice shuffled into the inner room and came out with a tin can filled with water. Serena took it from him and went hastily to the prostrate figure on the floor, and kneeling down by it, began to drop the water carefully upon the pale lips. Then she wetted her handkerchief and wiped away the blood that stained the broad forehead and matted the fair hair.

Robinson did not interfere. He was closing the heavy wooden shutters and barring them. This done he produced two lamps, and, lighting them, once more

Illuminated the room, from which he had just shut out the moonlight.

He turned about once and glanced at his prisoners, and said to his companion, in a low voice:

"It is as well they have something to occupy their minds and keep them from making a fuss and a noise. I reckon that chap is beyond much help. But it's no harm for them to try. We must go round and finish up our business here. Lock the doors both ways and come out and help me while they are quiet."

The moment that Leina perceived they were alone she flung her arms around Serena.

"Oh, Serena, Serena, what shall we do? What shall we do? Even if we escape from this house we cannot find our way back. I cannot imagine where we are. Oh, Serena, how can you look so calm?"

"Because there is nothing else for us now but to do the best we can," answered Serena, gently, disengaging herself and returning to her attempts to revive the insensible man. "Dear Leina, how can you forget your friend's need? Help me chase these cold hands. One would think you had not cared to meet this Aubrey Dalberg."

"Aubrey Dalberg!—this is not my Aubrey Dalberg, Serena," returned Leina, in indignation.

Serena lifted her bowed head to look for a moment inquiringly into her face, then dropped it again, a faint colour stealing into her cheeks.

"Well, he is good and noble, and he came to our defence, and has nearly if not quite lost his life by it. We must not let him die."

Even while she spoke the pale eyelids fluttered and the bright, frank eyes she had secretly admired that afternoon looked up into hers.

"I am not dead," he murmured; "nor do I believe I am dangerously hurt. I came to my senses while somebody was bringing me along, but could not remember anything. It has all come back now. Where are the men?"

"Gone out, and we are locked into a room in some strange place. Oh, can you help us?" cried Leina, bending down over him tearfully.

He smiled very feebly and turned his eyes again to Serena's calm and calmly face.

"Hardly yet, I fear; but while I have been gasping for breath I have been thinking. They must not know I have revived. Let them think me still helpless and insensible. Who knows what opportunity may come?"

He tried to lift his head while he was speaking, but turned deathly pale again, and shut his eyes.

"Not yet," whispered Serena, hastily moistening his lips, and then wiping his forehead with the wet handkerchief. "Oh, that we only had some wine to

give you, or restorative of any sort. Try the water again."

"Thank you. Don't distress yourself. Let me lie quietly and I shall be all right," he whispered, after a moment's rest.

Serena's soft fingers drew away the curling wet hair, and wiped again the slowly oozing blood from the gaping wound, which she examined with steady eyes, while Leina shrank back, faint and giddy at the sight.

"No, it is not a dangerous wound. I can see that it is not," she said. "And since you have revived, with your mind unharmed, I am confident that the worst is past. It is the weakness from the loss of blood, and the effects of that stunning blow that trouble you now."

"Yes, I am sure of it. Let me still feign insensibility when those men are near, until I have my strength back again. Oh, for my pistols, or Nat's trusty rifle!" he exclaimed, with more spirit than he had yet exhibited.

"Hush!" whispered Serena. "They are coming back."

It was Robinson's rough hand which turned the key, and his odious voice which jerked out an imprecation because the rusty lock refused to yield at the first effort.

But he assumed a poor air of gallantry as he turned to them.

"Well, my fair ladies, I have been faithfully at work in your service. Every door and window is safely barred from attack without, as well as escape within. I have made a little room in readiness for you."

"Why have you taken us away in this strange fashion?" asked Serena. "What have we done to provoke such ill-will on your part?"

"Bless your pretty eyes, nothing—nothing at all," answered the man, carelessly. "And if you behave civilly there shan't any harm come to you. Now make yourselves happy and contented, and I promise you it will all come out right."

"But why do you refuse us our liberty?" questioned Leina, indignantly.

"It is all on your account, my dear. Who can see the chance to make a nice little pile slip straight through their fingers, especially when their locker is pretty low? Don't you know your own value, you pretty little humming-bird? Don't you know there's them as will give their hundreds and their thousands of pounds to get you?"

"No, I do not; I'm sure I do not," answered Leina. "They are very careful of my safety, but they are not rich—none of the Fosses are rich—and how then can they give the money?"

Robinson snapped his fingers lightly. "Oh, blarney! Do I mean to squeeze a stone? The Fosses are the ones to pull the string, but there's somebody behind. I found that out by the letter I stole—a letter that was going to that innocent Mr. Nathaniel, the hermit. A pretty hermit! It is he that means to make the money; but he'll find I've forestalled him. Come now, just tell me who the great man is in Germany, and the quicker I get his answer the quicker you'll be set at liberty."

"The great man's name in Germany!" repeated Leina, and then burst into an angry, bitter laugh, as she turned upon him with flashing eyes. "You have miscalculated if you think to obtain any information from me. I am in utter ignorance of everything. I am the last, the very last to whom you should look for knowledge."

"Is that true, young woman? You needn't think you can cheat me, or stop me in this thing. I know that money will be paid freely to get you back. And that money I mean to have or my wits will give out." Leina lifted up her hand with a passionate gesture.

"I tell you in the sight of Heaven I know nothing, not even my rightful name or rank."

Another eye besides Jack's watched her face. Stephano, through his half-closed eyelids, saw every ingenious shade of expression there.

"Well, that is queer," said Jack, evidently convinced of the truth of the assertion. "However there is more than one way to skin a cat. That Nat knows, and his papers tell. I know where he keeps them."

"Do you mean to keep us here until you hear from Germany?" asked Serena. "That will be a long time, and as a starved heiress would hardly bring a very magnificent reward I presume you mean to provide her with food. Surely you will find the experiment a costly one."

"But I shall have back my pay for it all," quoth Jack, confidently.

"But you have not yet explained why I am also debarr'd from my liberty," said Serena, calmly.

"Faith, because you were saving the other one. Besides, I knew you would keep her more contented. Where a fellow expects a big reward he needn't consider trifling expenses."

"You really think to hide us from the search of friends, and to secure yourself from the punishment the law gives for such a lawless proceeding?" proceeded Serena. "Rash man, for your own safety's sake you had better send us back while yet it is possible, and go your own way in peace. We will promise to remain silent."

Robinson laughed lightly.

"I am not easily scared. Who do you think will for a moment venture to this spot? You know how the fishermen shun the place. 'The Witches' Cave and Haunted Castle are little troubled by visitors. They have too bad a reputation. Besides, I have not left a trace to betray anything. If they land below through the surf, which is something not often done, and get up the steep walls, then we have but to move you into the secret passage-way from the cellar, and what wiser are they?"

"It is a daring plot," said Serena, gravely.

"I am used to daring and reckless things," answered he; "but come, these are your quarters for some time to come. I advise you to make the best of them. You will see, when you examine for yourself, that it is no use to hatch up any plans for escape. The place has been fitted up for such use, and it was strong at first, built for a sort of light-house, you may have heard. I say one man could guard a dozen others shut in here, and it's no use for you to think of getting away till we are ready for you to go."

"Well, I should think we might understand it," broke in Leina, pettishly.

"I hope you do. What I want is for you to be contented, and not go to pining. You're too precious, you know, to be lost by illness, or anything of that sort. There's a bedroom for you—that door there opens into it. You may go there when you please, and there's a bolt on the door inside. Now I say that ought to content you."

"It is far better than my fears foretold," exclaimed Serena. "Leina, dear, we will try to reconcile ourselves to circumstances. My worst fears are quieted. We shall not be molested, only confined here to await the ransom he expects for you."

"Now that's a sensible girl!" cried Robinson, admiringly; "just take her advice, my little heiress, and you may have a nice little time here."

"And this gentleman," said Serena, suddenly, "this noble, innocent man who came to rescue two unknown women in their trouble, what is to be done with him?"

"Confound his interference," growled Jack. "I wish bad enough that he had kept away. Is he dead yet?"

"No," answered Serena, gently; "and if you

want to save your soul from the dreadful remorse such a crime must bring to it one time or another, you will let me nurse him back to life, however long it may take. He will be likely to have a brain-fever and be helpless and unconscious many days, but perhaps his life may be spared."

Robinson stood in silence for a few moments, looking down upon the motionless figure in uncertainty and perplexity.

"It's a great pity he meddled. It's a chap that was getting birds stuffed at that Nat's. I wonder if there'll be a hue and cry over him too."

"Let me take care of him. You will never be sorry for it," persuaded Serena.

He looked up at the clear, innocent, steady eyes and smiled.

"You're a brave girl, and a good one. I'll give you credit for that. Yes, you shall have your way about it. He shall have a cot bed in here, and there's a few things in the closet. You're welcome to anything you can find. There's an old medicine chest that came out of the schooner somewhere in the closet."

Then he shuffled off out of the room, drawing his sleeve across his eye while he muttered:

"What in the world ails me? There's something about her that makes me think of my little sister that went among the angels, if ever anybody did. It won't do for me to let her talk to me much. She'll coax everything out of me; and she makes me feel as if—as if there wasn't a spot in my soul clean enough for her to touch her white finger tip to. Confound it! what a soft old idiot I am. I'd rather she'd spit and fire up like a young kitten, as the 'tother one does."

What in the world should set me to thinking of little Molly to-night?—little Molly as hugged my neck so tight and said, 'You're a coming too, Jack; you're a coming some time too,' and dropped back dead. It's them great blue eyes of hers. They've got just the innocent look in 'em that Molly's had. I'll let them have the key inside. When I once got this money I'll wash my hands of all this dirty work—I will for little Molly's sake. How long it is since I've thought of her. By George! she wouldn't know the great rough villain I've grown into!"

He sighed drearily, and then snapped out to his comrade, who was making a fire on the hearth of what seemed to be the kitchen of the house:

"Look alive there, man; isn't the fire aught yet? When it is ask the young lady if she would like a cup of tea."

All unconscious of the singular softening of Jack's wicked heart through her influence, Serena turned to Leina as he closed the door, and shed her first tear as she clasped her in her arms.

"Leina, dear Leina, Heaven be praised that we are safe from the indignities I dreaded. We shall be safe and treated respectfully. I have no concern about it now. The man is only thinking about the money he will obtain as a ransom, and that very money will only be secured through your safety. My worst fears are set at rest."

Leina returned her kisses with redoubled fondness. "Then I will try to be patient and cheerful. You know how many times I have said I would welcome any change. I ought not perhaps to complain of this, but one thing is evident, there is no delusion about my expectations. You see even this ruffian seems to understand it. He wants the name of a great man in Germany. Serena, dear Serena, do you think I shall ever find it out for myself?"

"Let us hope so, dear," returned Serena. "Will you look into the other room and see what sort of a place it is? And I must search for the medicine chest and find a cordial of some kind."

Stephano opened his eyes and smiled.

"I am recovering my strength; I think I could rise without assistance, but it is better not to try. They must believe me helpless and unconscious."

And so they believed him when the two men came in with the cot-bed, and lifted him upon it carefully, and he gave no sign of intelligence.

"I must get away before the tide is full again," said Jack. "Remember all that I have charged upon you. Keep a look-out for the schooner's signal, though I do not expect it for ten days yet. I shall bring plenty of supplies the next time I come," he said to his accomplice.

"Did you hear about the schooner, Serena?" whispered Leina, as soon as the two men had left the room, locking the bolts behind them. "Do you think they mean to take us away in a schooner?"

"I hardly believe it. I should not wonder after all if there is some foundation for the fishermen's story about the strange sights seen here. All this underground passage has its meaning. I suspect it is the retreat of some organized band of smugglers, and that these two men are connected with the band. Pray Heaven that we are found before the schooner comes, if that is the case."

"Do you think they will ever find us? Just imagine

how mysterious such a sudden disappearance must seem to them. There is not a single clue to show what has become of us."

"Very little, I know. They may find the empty boat that this gentleman came in; and my hat is in that. When the two boats were in contact I managed to push the hat with my elbows until it fell in. I don't know exactly what object I had except that it would show that the boat had been near us. I begin to think of my poor dear grandmother. I am afraid that the anxiety and suffering will make her ill. Oh, that I had the power to send her a word of comfort."

"And to think we are so near, only so short a distance from our own island. Can it be they will leave this spot unsearched?" pursued Leina, mournfully.

"I have great faith in Nat's shrewdness and wisdom, Leina. I am sure Nat will find us," returned Serena, reassuringly. "Let us hope for the best while we may."

"Besides, it may clear up the mystery that surrounds me," continued Leina, brightening up. "If it do that I shall be grateful for this adventure, hazardous though it may be. What did the man mean by saying that Nat knew? If I was sure he did, he should have no rest or peace until he told me all. Ah, me, if only really and truly my Aubrey Dalberg would come and explain all."

"Your Aubrey Dalberg?" repeated the pale lips of the young gentleman on the cot-bed. "Do you mean that you know an Aubrey Dalberg?"

"Yes, and why have you stolen his name?" returned Leina, with one of her flashing, saucy glances. "You should be ashamed of it."

The careless thrust went home.

"You are right," said Stephano, meekly. "I have stolen his name, and I am ashamed."

"Do you really know him?" demanded Leina, standing over him with shining eyes and smiling red lips. "Oh, tell me if he had accomplished my errand. Did he send you to tell me my true name?"

Stephano was not looking at her face, bright and beautiful and glowing as it was. His eyes had gone beyond to the calm and silently blue orbs turned upon him in such sweet and serious attention.

"I should not wonder if that is what it amounts to," he murmured, "for I can, and I will tell you all you desire to know."

Leina clasped her hands joyously.

"Oh, how thankful I am that all this has happened," she cried, in her pretty, impetuous way. "Only think, only think, Serena. I shall know at last. We shall be happy at last."

"We?" repeated Stephano, wistfully.

"Yes, Serena and I. Do you think I shall accept any grandeur or happiness that Serena does not share?" returned Leina, clasping her friend's hand tenderly.

"You are a tender-hearted, generous little creature," exclaimed Stephano, warmly.

"Why don't you tell me? why do you not speak?" persisted Leina.

"Not to-night, dear; he is weak and ill, and you must not try him any farther," said Serena, in her mild but authoritative fashion. "You also will be too excited to obtain any rest, and remember we have a long and tedious day before us, perhaps many weary days of imprisonment. Since the gentleman is so far recovered we had best leave him to sleep. We can bolt this inner door from intrusion you see, even though we are also bolted on the other side from escape. The best thing for us all is to find what strength we can in rest and sleep. Perhaps to-morrow will show us a safe way of escape, or our friends may find us. We shall need a night's rest at all events. Come, Leina, to-morrow you shall have the story."

She drew Leina into the little dreary-looking room beyond, and then came back to set the water within reach of Stephano's hand, and to give him a biscuit from the closet. When this was done she took up an unlighted candle and a match, saying gently, and in a matter-of-fact tone as if she were dispensing the hospitalities of her own house:

"Good-night. I hope you will be able to sleep quietly."

When the dingy door closed behind her Stephano felt as if a star had set.

"What an incomparable woman!" he muttered. "She is a treasure as much more precious than all the Schwarzenburg riches and honours as a pure soul is beyond the price of gold and diamonds."

Then he fell into a deep and not altogether pleasant reverie.

CHAPTER XXV.

Make the doors upon a woman's wit and it will out the casement. Shakespeare.

The aeronaut's bright idea had been cautiously whispered to the fraulein before the evening ended.

She turned very pale, shed a few bitter tears, and then looked up into his face with her own brave, steady eyes.

"You are right, my Carl, it is the best thing to be done. The only thing possible to save the young lady from falling again into such cruel hands, and to save you also from punishment for the aid you have already afforded. I think I can do it. I can try at least."

And she went off as he had instructed her, and took a little row of faded silk under her arm, and a lamp in her hand, up into the attic.

She was watched of course by the spies, but though she was well enough aware of it she went unconcernedly, humming a tune now under her breath, and now swelling louder in a sort of meaningless jargon one would have thought it.

One of the men came up lightly, and looked at her curiously.

She nodded a careless recognition of his presence. "I am getting my husband a comfortable coverlet ready. The master down below said something about a prison, and if innocent houses are taken possession of in this fashion I don't know why you won't dare to go to farther lengths and drag him away. He shall have something to make him comfortable."

And down she sat amid a heap of faded clothing, and began stitching diligently.

The spy lingered a little while, and then sauntered away downstairs again, but kept within hearing of the crooning voice.

If there was really a hidden prisoner all the wiser was it for him to give her a chance to betray it by attempting communication. So he kept out of sight, but remained within hearing.

The fraulein understood all this very well. But she sang on, with one eye on the stairs and the other upon the wardrobe.

Slowly and cautiously its doors were unclosing, and in another moment a pale face appeared in view, and looked out to her in desperate appeal in answer to the call.

"Go on, go on; please not, oh, knight!" sang Crezene, in the most careless tone, pointing vehemently, mean while, to the ladder, which led up to the skylight on the roof.

There was no mistaking her meaning.

Lady Pauline crept silently up the ladder, noiselessly unfastened the board cover of the narrow aperture, and crept through.

"And wait, and wait," sang Crezene; "the deliverer comes."

And, shaking out the cloth, she rose up, taking pains to make considerable noise about it, and went tripping down the stairs.

"I have my coverlet nearly done," she said, entering the room where her husband and the leader of the spying party were sitting in gloomy silence, "but I cannot get open the old trunk to find my binding. Something is the matter with the hump; come and open it for me, Carl."

The aeronaut rose, after a moment's feeble demur, and his wife slowly followed him.

Behind her crept likewise the leader of the band. "Now I shall discover something," thought he, chuckling, keeping stealthily in the background, and motioning to his subordinates to do the same.

He heard however only the noise of some one from fling against a lock, and the low voice of the fraulein talking. He fancied once that there came the sound of a clanking sob, and strained his ear more closely. Then the lid of the trunk was opened, creaking dismally, and fell again with a heavy thump.

Half an hour longer he waited, hearing occasionally the broken murmur of the fraulein's voice. Then becoming impatient he called to her:

"Fraulein, Fraulein Keoppel."

She came promptly.

"Is my little one crying—do you want me?"

"Tell your husband to come down. I have something to say to him."

"Tell me, and I will repeat it. He is busy now."

"I will come and help him."

The man came bounding up the stairs. She stood there before him, with bright, resolute eyes, and a pale face, from which the traces of tears had been hastily wiped.

The man stared about him.

"Why, why, where is your husband?" he stammered, and rushed around the place, then dashed into the wardrobe, uttering a fierce exclamation as he saw its open back.

He sprang into the concealed chamber, searched it over, and came out to her fierce and stern.

"What has become of your husband? Where is the lady who was hiding there? Speak—answer me. They were here a moment ago. What has become of them? They must be here somewhere. What, oh! Hans, Seippel, come up and help me search!"

As he tore frantically about, still positive that the

fugitives were concealed somewhere behind the lumbering furniture of the attic, the fraulein slipped through the door-way, and ran down to her child's cradle, catching up the sleeping little one and pressing him fondly and passionately to her breast.

"Oh, my darling, my innocent lamb, pray with me to the saints to guard and keep him!" she whispered.

She then listened anxiously to the noise above. They were out on the roof at last. She could hear their shouts. Would they understand; would they guess his method of escape? She looked longingly to the outer door. Every pulse throbbed fiercely in the wild desire to rush forth and learn for herself what was happening—what had happened. But she knew too well that an armed spy kept guard there also. Besides, she must in no way aid them to surmise how they had made escape. She sat down with the boy in her arms, rocking herself to and fro, and nerving her trembling heart for the tempest of wrath she knew would burst upon her head. After something like fifteen minutes spent in thorough search of the attic itself and the roof above, the men came pouring down. The leader seized the fraulein's arm fiercely.

"Speak, answer me, if you would save yourself bitter pain. Tell me where and how your husband fled. He went out upon the roof, but he could not reach the other roof, nor could he jump down without injury to himself, much more to the woman who, we know now, was concealed in that chamber behind the wardrobe. How did he escape?"

"I was not there. He went up upon the roof, and more I did not see," was all the answer he could wring from her.

He thrust her from him, and hurried out to the men stationed in the street to watch the front and the rear of the house.

Since sunset the sky had been overcast, although no rain had fallen, and the murky clouds had veiled the star beams. The street was dark, silent—gloomy looking.

He demanded, eagerly:

"Have you seen aught descending from the roof? Have you heard any noise in the vicinity?"

No, all had been quiet and peaceful.

One man alone recalled a singular rushing noise as of a flight of birds.

"The balloon again! Has any one seen anything of a second balloon to-day?" cried the leader, striking his hands together fiercely.

"Yes," was the eager reply. There had been a small balloon fastened up at the roof; but it looked more like a plaything than anything else. He had inquired about it of one of the neighbours, and he had explained that it was the aeronaut's sign. There was no car at all attached to it.

The baffled detective rushed down the street, and almost ran into the little cavalcade of swift riders dashing around the corner.

He drew himself back, and smote upon his breast fiercely.

"It is the prince! He has answered my message in person. He has come to identify the lady. She has gone. He will never listen to my excuses. I am undone! I am ruined!"

And he turned, and followed them back to the aeronaut's door overwhelmed with shame and terror. The foremost of the cavalcade leaped from the saddle lightly, for all his clumsy weight.

"This is the house. It must be here my flying bird is caged. This aspiring aeronaut shall learn that a sorrier day's work his balloon could not have done for him. Ho, there! open to me!"

He knocked rudely with his sword hilt upon the door, which was promptly opened by one of his own hirelings within.

"Well, where is Hernberg?" he asked, carelessly, while the man made his profound obeisance. "The footsteps of his messenger have hardly kept pace with mine. What have you done with the lady?"

Hernberg was creeping through the still unclosed door.

With shaking knees and sinking heart he crept forward and tried to speak, but the words seemed glued to his reluctant lips.

His royal patron turned upon him with a well-pleased smile.

"You have done well, Hernberg. I do not forget such prompt service. You have shown wisdom and loyal disposition both. Come, lead me at once to the lady. I am impatient to congratulate her upon the speedy termination of her romantic journey. And when I have paid my respects to her I will come back to help you dispose of this valiant and philanthropic aeronaut."

What cool sarcasm played in the courtly tones. What deadly rage was glittering in his eyes.

The fraulein, shrinking away in the shadow of the cradle, rose from her knees and pressed both hands against the heart that seemed to stop its beating.

And this was the royal prince, the man who was to sit on the throne when the aged king should pass away, her country's ruler and king.

Ah, amid all her terror she felt a thrill of exaltation!

She would mourn no longer at exile. Let it come. Her Carl should be king, country, and all. His broad, generous heart, his noble mind, his pure soul were beyond the value of all the rest.

But, oh, if Carl should not escape. If he and his hapless companion were overtaken. Well might the little wife's blood curdle at the thought. For even without the story Lady Pauline had told she read the malignant, merciless nature in those savage eyes, that cruel, pitiless mouth.

Her pale face, her wild eyes arrested the attention of the prince.

A mocking smile crossed his face. "Ah, I see, the balloonist's treasures! Humph! they would be worth something now if the man had escaped us!"

"Your highness," groaned Hernberg, clasping his hands in entreaty, "that is just what has happened. He has escaped!"

"Perdition! that is bad news. I have been puzzling all the way just what sort of punishment would most torture him," snarled the prince.

"Indeed, indeed, it was not through carelessness of mine. The father of evil helped him surely, for I was watching the door of the room where he was every moment. I hope your highness will not blame me too severely."

"Well, well, it is not so bad as it might be. The security of the lady was the principal thing. Lead me to her, I say."

"Oh, but, your highness, the lady has disappeared with him," tremulously declared the man.

Now indeed they witnessed a tempest of wrath. He uttered volley after volley of oaths, he stamped, he raged, he anathematized them all. He even so far forgot his royal blood as to strike poor Hernberg with his sword.

He seized the fraulein roughly by the shoulder, and shook her fiercely, while he demanded of her the destination of her husband.

Pale as death, with eyes glittering with horror and dread, Crezene stood the test nobly.

"I know nothing. I can tell you nothing. He had no time to explain. He only said that the toy balloon was strong enough to take him up into the air, and that he could hush himself to the rope, and was not afraid to risk the trial. I saw nothing. There is no more for me to tell," she reiterated, firmly.

He flung her away with a force that sent her reeling against the wall, and woke the babe, who began to cry lustily.

"Away with her. Guard the mate and whelp securely. We will find the tiger yet. Ho! out on the pursuit! We can hunt them down yet. What is an hour's start, if there be as much? Call up more men if need be, and scour the country on every side," vociferated he, coming out of his passion into the grim determination that was the man's power and strength.

"I will find them, if I creep on my knees for leagues," cried out Hernberg; "and no accursed balloon shall take them out of my reach again, though the fiend himself came in it!"

"Find them, and I will take back my displeasure," declared the master.

Then in hot haste, though with little noise, the whole party set forth again, separating in four directions.

It was less difficult than they had feared to trace the fugitives.

Scarcely two miles out they came upon the balloon, collapsed and spent, lying forsaken in the highway.

They searched carefully for a trace of the fugitives it had borne away from the aeronaut's roof at such imminent risk.

But not a sign was given.

Another mile onward they met a rustic cart, and, eagerly questioning the driver, learned that he himself was just returning from taking a strange man and veiled lady to the turnpike on the other side.

"What became of them? Where did you leave them?" interrupted a fierce, high voice, which the cartman little enough suspected belonged to the royal prince himself.

"They got out, sir; they said they had only a little place farther to walk."

"On, on; our horses are mettlesome and fresh. We cannot fail to overtake their flying steps, however swiftly they run," cried out the prince, spurring on at the head of the party.

The clouds were breaking and a star or two shone down upon their course. All rode in silence and at the top of their speed.

A sweet, holy tranquillity which the hot, fiery heart of the leader could not appreciate or understand brooded over the earth.

Now and then a lazy insect, as if startled from slumber by the noise of the even hoof falls, whirled forth a shrill call which, dying away, left the stillness still more impressive.

Presently there came an echoing footstep shuffling down the turnpike, and each rider came to an abrupt halt at the imperative wave of the leader's hand.

It was a solitary man, who stopped, hesitated and then turned in consternation to fly.

"Halt!" commanded a stern voice, and he tremblingly obeyed.

"Who are you, and where have you been?"

"I am Goltfried Hutz. I have—been—over to the beer-house in the village," came in stammering reply.

"And it takes you all this time to get home? Tut, man, that is an unlikely story. Where have you been meanwhile?"

"I laid down a little to sleep," was the reluctant admission.

"Then you know nothing of who passed on?" was said, in a voice whose disappointment was plainly enough revealed.

He started forward briskly.

"Mebbe I know what you want. There was a man and a woman came and sat down on the roadside and talked there."

"By Heavens! it must be those we seek. Speak! Tell us what they said!"

"They seemed in trouble; they were running away from somewhere; and the woman was tired, and had a faint, low voice, but wasn't it soft and sweet?"

"Go on, tell what she said," was the stern interruption, "and not waste time in your idle descriptions."

"She said they must go somewhere, though he begged her to give it up. She said that there was a hidden treasure which she must find; that it would save their lives, perhaps, if they were taken. She talked grand enough. She said that as a last resort with some sort of papers in her hand she should appeal to the king!"

The prince gnawed fiercely at his lip.

"Go on; what else was said?"

"The man agreed at last to go, and said they were but a short distance away, but he feared the place was guarded. Then she laughed lightly and said she feared not if only she reached some bridge, for there was a secret passage even into the very heart of the house, and she knew every step of the way."

The horse of the prince gave a fierce bound; his rider's spur had been ground into the reeking flank. A coin came whizzing over the peasant's head.

"Away! away! let us waste no more time!" shouted the prince.

"But, your highness," whispered Hernberg, "we have not found out in what direction to turn."

"Have we not?" hissed he, between his teeth. "An arrow cannot fly straighter to its mark than I can lead to that artful woman's goal. Turn your horse's head straight towards Schwarzenburg, man."

And with this his plunging steed went flying on before them all, as if newly inspired with strength.

(To be continued.)

GLIMPSES OF SOCIETY.

CHAPTER XXV.

BARNABAS BLUDGE having detailed his plan of getting a captain and crew for the "Stellarita," Edward Zane's new yacht, to his partner in rascality, Volchini, and having received the assurance of the latter that he would get "Bonny Doon," or Phorresterre, the appointment, thought it best to see the latter and apprise him of what he was doing, or rather what he intended to do.

Therefore, for some reason, so disguising himself that his most intimate friends would not have known him—using false hair and whiskers differing in colour from his own, and clothes of another kind than his general wear—he left his quarters and proceeded to what could not be properly termed either an hotel or boarding-house, though it bore the name of the first.

Unlike an hotel, no stranger could get a room there—no stranger to the proprietor we mean—at any price. And what "boarders" there were kept their rooms, generally, except at night—receiving their meals there, etc. No one could see these boarders except he passed under the inspection of the said proprietor, who had a select body of servants who knew nothing except to obey orders.

This "proprietor" kept his post in the bar of his "hotel," and if there was a ring at the private door he alone answered it.

At this private door Barnabas Bludge rang—three quick, sharp pulls—another at a half-minute interval.

"The signal is correct. I wonder who is pushed now?" said the proprietor, going to the door.

Partially opening it—there was a chain which until unloosed from within would have held it from opening farther—he asked who was there.

"Me—Barnabas Bludge—and I've come to see Number Eleven!" said the gambler.

"All right. I hope you've come to get him away. I like him, but it is a fearful risk to keep him here with such rewards out."

"I know it—but you are paid well. You hold the diamonds and—"

"Hush, Bludge—hush, and come in. Walls have ears, and the detectives are on the hunt night and day."

"I know it, and I come to get him out of your way. I have got a sure and safe plan now. I will have him aloft inside of twenty-four hours."

"That pretty wife of his I don't believe will allow fire or water to separate her from him—I never saw such devotion."

"Well," said the gambler, "they needn't separate. Send up a couple of bottles of good wine, you know the kind. I'm as dry as tinder in the forenoon!"

The proprietor went for the wine while the gambler ascended the stairs to visit Number Eleven. Before he could enter this room he was questioned by a woman, in a low tone of voice, for it seemed as if caution was there the presiding deity.

When he did enter Bludge was greeted, not warmly, but with civility by a young and rather fine-looking man, while a very prepossessing young woman handed him a chair.

"Have you news for me?" the young man asked, in a low tone.

"Yes—good news. To-morrow, if you choose, with a crew of your own selection, you will take command of a large, fast-sailing yacht, with an easy idiot for an owner, who is drunk two-thirds of his time, and who will do just as you want him to. If you find danger approaching, you can tip him overboard and slip for the other side of the world."

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, tempt him not into another murder!" said the woman, imploringly.

"Hush, sweet wife—hush! Blood shall never stain my hand again. I have promised that to you, and never will I break my promise!"

After thus calming his young and beautiful wife the young man turned to Bludge and said:

"Give me particulars now, please."

"I will as soon as some wine I ordered comes up. I am dry, and I know you must be."

"He will not taste wine, sir," said the young wife.

"That he has solemnly promised to me, and I know he will keep his promise."

"Yes, pet, I will. Not that I feel as you do that it would endanger my safety by making me imprudent, but because I promised you I would not touch it. I am bad—my hand is red with human blood—but one thing shall be said when I die—I never broke a promise to my heart's true love."

"Heaven bless you, my husband—you are not half so bad as those who led and drove you into an evil course. I love you and glory in your love, and for good or for evil, while life is mine, I am for ever yours!"

He pressed her hand tenderly, raised it to his lips, and, turning to Bludge, said:

"She is worth living for—ay, and to die for her would not be hard!"

The latter made no reply, for at that instant the proprietor came up with two bottles of wine.

"Take back one. I've got to drink alone here, it seems," said Bludge.

"I could have told you that," said the proprietor. "Number Eleven is sensible. No man in his peril should take that which makes him forget that caution is a jewel."

So the proprietor left one bottle for Bludge and returned to his bar.

Bludge swallowed a tumblerful of wine, and then told Number Eleven—or, as we can now know him, Captain Phorresterre—of the opening on the yacht "Stellarita."

"Can my wife go with me?" asked the young man.

"I will not leave her."

"We will arrange that she can—if in no other way as your cabin boy in male clothing."

"I will not so humiliate her. She is my better angel—she is more than life to me!"

"Dearest husband, disguise will be no humiliation to me, if assumed that I may remain with you—watch over your safety. I will gladly assume it—anything to relieve you from this prison-like home, this dread of danger. Accept, accept at once, and I will be with you in some capacity. You know I will not part from you."

Phorresterre's eyes were dim with tears as he spoke—not to her, but to Bludge:

"Never had a good man a better wife. How much, then, should a dead like me appreciate her and obey

her wishes? I will accept that command. Tell the landlord below of it, and tell him to select a crew of the sworn members of our confederacy. With a crew of men who know that betrayal of a brother is as sure to bring death by torture as that the sun rises and sets I will feel safe. My rank in the confederacy will place all he can employ under me—so I will be safe."

"Then it is arranged," said Bludge as he filled and emptied another tumbler. "There is but one condition, and I know you will agree to that."

"Name it," said Phorresterre.

"Volchini and I have a game to play, in which a woman also takes a hand. It is to skin the owner of that yacht just as long as we can make a shilling from him."

"That will be your business, not mine. If I understand my place I am to sail and command the yacht. I can use her as a better place of concealment than any other for myself. If I see danger looming up I can make her the means of carrying me out of it."

"Yes."

"Then I shall not interfere with any of your plans."

"All right. You will get ready to go on board to-morrow. When all is arranged I will come for you and your cabin boy in a close carriage."

"We will be ready. Have you anything more to say?"

"No. Good-night."

The door of Number Eleven closed as Bludge departed.

Edward Zane walked out into the open air more like a guilty prisoner than a free man—more like a slavish dependent than a millionaire, such was his consciousness of guilt, such his shame at having been caught in the toils by that stern but good old man who had been so kind to him when he was poor, friendless and helpless.

When Mr. Evans without speaking pointed to his own carriage in front, its door open, he entered it without a word.

"Is the young girl coming too?" asked the merchant of Stokey, who had placed her on her feet on the pavement.

"Yes, sir," said Stokey, in his natural tone of voice. "Her eyes are open and she breathes hard."

"Then put her in the carriage by my side and you get in also. I will ask her where she wishes to go as we drive on. I wish to get away from here as soon as I can. The very atmosphere is stifling to me now."

In ten seconds more the carriage was moving on, and in it were Edward Zane and William Stokey on the front seat, Georgine and the merchant on the back.

As the carriage moved on Mr. Evans spoke to Georgine, down whose cheeks he could see tears silently streaming.

"Young lady," he said, gently, "if you will tell me where your home is I will leave you there."

She told him, adding, in a voice so low and tremulous he could just understand her:

"I have no other home. I teach music to live."

"You shall be taken there," he said. "I believe through Providence you have escaped a great danger this evening—perhaps ruin to soul and body."

"Oh, sir, I owe my thanks to you—but it is terrible, terrible to think he could deceive me. I loved him so much!"

She sobbed bitterly.

"I am sorry for you, my poor child, very sorry for you. But it was better you should know what he was before it was too late. If you had not loved him he could not so easily have deceived you. Love blinds its subjects all too easily."

The merchant pulled the check-string and told the driver where to stop to leave the young lady, and he then resumed the conversation.

"I will give you my card before I leave you," said he, "so that if you should hereafter need protection from persecution you may send to me for help. That man and that woman may yet strive to get you into their power; if they do let me know, and I will see that you are protected, they brought to justice."

"I was led to suppose, sir, that she was a lady of respectability. Her residence made me sure of it, for I thought that none but rich and respectable people lived there!"

"She is far from respectable, my dear girl. The house she keeps there is recorded on police rolls as disreputable, her millinery establishment is yet worse, and her house where she presides as the 'Veiled Prophetess' is worst of all, for there she marks her victims and lays plans for their ruin."

"Oh, Heaven, is she the Veiled Prophetess?"

"She is."

"Then, sir, I understand all. It was she who told me that an Italian count of great beauty and of fabu-

lous wealth would love and woo me. It was she who in a magic mirror showed me the likeness of Count Volchinski, and said it was he whom Heaven had destined as my mate!"

"Yes," said Stokely, "she reflected his likeness from a doggeritype into a looking-glass through a magic-lantern. I know the dodge of old!"

"Oh, Heaven, what an escape I have had, Sir, I thank you again from the very depths of my heart. I will strive hereafter to so live as to prove that I am not unworthy of your goodness."

The carriage stopped.

It had arrived in front of her lodging-house, and to save her from remark Mr. Everts helped her out, saw her to the door, and, waiting till she was admitted, remarked to the landlady that he was sorry to bring his young friend home so late, but it was so pleasant a party it was hard to leave it.

Poor Georgine thanked him, and then went to her room to weep over that terrible night's lesson.

Mr. Everts ordered the coachman to drive to his own house.

"Why not to mine, sir—why not to mine?" asked Edward Zane, anxiously. "Surely I have a right to go and see my own wife!"

"Would you, sir, profane the presence of my good, my virtuous child while yet reeking with the fumes of an infamous debauch? To-morrow morning, sir—when you are sober, sober and thoughtful of your past, so that you can shape a future, I will go with you to her. You must go to-night to my house, or to a prison!"

The young man knew his father-in-law too well to make another objection. But in a low, choked voice, he said:

"Perhaps Anna will sit up and watch for my coming!"

"No—she did not expect your return!" said the merchant. "She will rest better for your absence."

Edward Zane thought this a strange remark, but he was too culpable to make objections, too timid through that very culpability to ask questions.

Innocence is ever fearless, even if weak—guilt trembles at a shadow.

(To be continued.)

LADY BEACONSFIELD.

THE Right Hon. Mary Anne Disraeli, Viscountess Beaconsfield, was the only daughter of John Viney Evans, Esq., of Bramford Speke, Devonshire, and niece of General Sir James Viney, K.C.B., of Tyn-ton Manor, Glamorganshire, from whom she inherited the bulk of her fortune at the death of her brother, Colonel Viney Evans, of the 29th Infantry. In 1815 she was married to Wyndham Lewis, Esq., M.P., of Greenmeadow, in Glamorganshire. Mr. Lewis was Member for Maidstone, and it was for this borough that in 1837 Mr. Disraeli first entered Parliament, being Mr. Lewis's colleague. On the 14th of March, 1838, Mr. Lewis died, leaving no issue, and in September, 1839, his widow was wedded to Mr. Disraeli.

When Mr. Disraeli was Prime Minister in 1868, and it was thought that Her Majesty was about to confer some signal favour upon him, he gracefully placed upon the head of his wife the coronet that might have been his own. The public appreciated the tenderness and taste of this action, and though knowing but little of Lady Beaconsfield beyond what was conveyed to them by this tribute of her husband's respect and affection, ever after gave her a high place in their esteem as an English wife. Indeed she stands out a striking illustration of the power the most unobtrusive of women may exercise while keeping herself strictly to a woman's sphere.

Mr. Disraeli's wife came to his help when life threatened to be too short to assure him the prospect he had dreamt of. All he had asked was fair play for his talents at the start; her fortune gave him 'bat,' and he did the rest himself. But Mr. Disraeli was too shrewd a man to pay for name and power at the price of happiness. It is certain he chose wisely in every way, and seldom has a marriage proved more of a love match than this. From their wedding-day till her death the existence of each was merged in the other. It was their mutual happiness that the wife lived only for the husband; his extraordinary career was the happy achievement of her life, and it was her pride to shine in the reflection of his fame, while for his part Mr. Disraeli's affection for his wife was heightened by a deep sense of gratitude, and his gratitude was characteristic of one who is no ordinary man. It gave evidence of the nobler qualities that secured his political success. It flowed in a current at once steady, calm, and deep, and with a force and constancy of purpose not to be diverted by the accidents of his career. He kept no close debtor and creditor account with his conscience while he passed from triumph to triumph. How many husbands, far less engrossed, have considered a tithe of the fame he won sufficient acquittal of so old a debt. How

many content themselves with leaving their wives to enjoy prosperity in isolation. Mr. Disraeli did no such thing, although for that he would claim but little credit. The fact is his wife made his home a very happy one, and he turned to its peacefulness with intense relief in the midst of fierce political turmoil. We are apt to forget that most men lead a double life—that those of the strongest natures and sharpest individuality show themselves in the most marked contrasts. It was a pretty sight that of the remorseless Parliamentary gladiator who neither gave quarter nor asked it, who fought with venomous weapons, although he struck fairly and shot barbed darts which clung and rankled in the wounds—it was a pretty sight to see him in the soft sunshine of domestic life, anticipating the wishes of his wife with feminine tenderness of consideration, and receiving her ministering with the evident enjoyment which is the most delicate flattery of all. The secret of the spell she held him by was a simple one. She loved with her whole heart and soul, she believed in him above all men, and he appreciated at its real worth that single-minded, self-sacrificing devotion.

It is difficult to over-rate the strength and support given by unstinted love like that, and few, we suspect, appreciate it more than those who would seem to need it the least. It is neither counsel nor sparkle, but observant, ready sympathy that a man of energy and self-reliance longs for in moments of exhaustion and depression, and the more impassable the mask he wears the greater the relief of being able to drop it in private.

Except for the subtle influences of the home she made him the help she brought was passive rather than active. She had neither social talent nor fascination to place at his disposal while he led his party in the Lower House or served the State as Premier of England—it was not in her to make his salons a centre of society, to gather within the range of his influence eminent Englishmen and intellectual foreigners—she was no Lady Palmerston, to act as her husband's most trusted ally, working for him in season and out of season, with tact, quickened by love—her death will leave no gap behind her which bereaved society will find it hard to fill—nevertheless her husband will perhaps lose the more that society will lose the less, for the loss of his companion has snapped the tender associations of a lifetime, and must have left a blank which nothing can entirely fill.

Lady Beaconsfield expired about noon on Sunday, the 15th ult., from pneumonia followed by bronchitis, in her eighty-third year. The funeral took place on the following Thursday in the family vault in the churchyard of St. Michael, in the park of Hughenden, no one being present except those connected with the estate and village. The vault is of quite modern construction, and contained prior to this last interment only the coffins and remains of James Disraeli, brother of Mr. Disraeli, and of Mrs. Williams, the lady who bequeathed a considerable sum of money to Mr. Disraeli some years since.

As the hour for the funeral approached the occupants of many of the cottages upon the estate gathered, in spite of the rain, to see the last of a mistress who had ever been most kind to them. The coffin upon being placed in the chancel was covered with lovely wreaths of flowers sent by the Baroness Meyer De Rothschild and other ladies, and after the completion of the impressive service was lowered to its place in the vault, where it remained literally covered with the votive flowers laid upon it.

THE FORTUNES OF BRAMBLETHORPE.

CHAPTER VI.

There's nothing half so sweet in life
As love's young dream. Moore.

ESTELLE did not wish the earl and his son to meet before she had seen the latter. She was careful to be in the breakfast-room early, in the hope that Lord Harry would appear before the others. It chanced that he did so. Sauntering into that apartment with the morning paper in his hand, he saw Estelle by the window, fidgeting with the curtain tassels. She blushed high as she turned toward him. For once she was dreadfully embarrassed—not half so much by the remembrance of the avowal she had made him the previous evening as by the confession she had now to make, which must form, to say the least, a singular contrast to that avowal.

She would gladly have allowed the news of her engagement to reach him when she was not present, but she dared not risk it. In spite of her threats, he might see fit to inform his father of the facility with which she 'put off the old love to put on the new,' and it was her present rôle to convince the earl that she was deeply in love with him.

Harry coloured also.

Of the two he had the more modesty. He thought it quite natural that she should blush after the scene in the drawing-room, and he was embarrassed for her. After bidding her good-morning he affected to be interested in his paper. She swallowed her words once or twice, but finally managed to say, coming close to him:

"I have more news for you than you will find in the paper."

He looked at her inquiringly.

"The friend of whom I last night warned you has already made his decision in my favour. Will you not congratulate your future mother, the soon-to-be Countess of Bramblethorpe?"

"Estelle, you are jesting!"

His face grew white and his eyes flashed fire.

At that, seeing him so angry, she recovered her own audacity, fully enjoying the keenness of her triumph.

"There is no jesting in this matter, my lord. I have sought this opportunity to be the first to announce the news to you that I might warn you to keep silence with regard to what has passed between us. Take my word for it that a graceful compliance with the course of events will be wise in you. It is well for the Earl of Bramblethorpe that I should marry him; it is well for you and your sisters. As a member of the family I shall have no temptation to betray the earl's secret."

"You are a fiend!" said the usually placid gentleman, shrinking from her with an expression of aversion.

"Hardly so bad as that, only a worldly woman like many another. I told you that if I could not have love I would have power. Accident placed in my possession the key which unlocked the latter to my grasp. It is not strange that I help myself to this sweet possession. I have always been living on favour. I prefer to feel a right to what I have. Indeed, Harry, I intend to make your father a kind and affectionate wife," she continued, more humbly. "I do not wish any of you to dislike me, and if you do not persecute me be sure I shall not persecute you. Shall we be friends?"

She held out her hand. He took it, with evident reluctance, but made an effort to master his coldness.

"It is a shock to me," he said, "to think of any one taking the place of my dead mother. You are young, Estelle, and not naturally inclined to moderation in your impulses and actions. If you do become Countess of Bramblethorpe I trust that you will acquire with the title greater dignity. Some very noble ladies have held that place in years gone by."

"Your lordship wishes to tell me that I am not a lady. My father holds the same rank held by the earl's own brother."

"It is not that. A girl who can do what you have done, Cousin Estelle, is not to be trusted with the honours of a place like that which you crave. I think of my sisters; my father, too, is an excessively proud man. I only say that I hope you will feel the seriousness of your new position, and set yourself, with all your soul, to do credit to it."

"Thank you, my lord, for your lecture," she said, with a mocking courtesy. "When I get to be your mamma I will return the favour. I could humble the pride of the Bramblethorpes to the dust any hour that I chose. Do not be afraid of my disgracing you, my lord—the disgrace will come from a different quarter. Only remember, what I have several times told you, that the best way to prop your haughty old house is to put my shoulder under it. When my interests are identical with yours there will be greater safety for you, the future heir. Therefore, I advise you," she added, quickly, under her breath as the butler came in with the morning meal, "to assist the good impression which I have made on your father. In this way we can be friends."

"I do not say that we are enemies," he responded, rather reluctantly.

Estelle turned back to the window, for she heard steps in the hall; the door opened, and in came the earl, with Clara, who had waylaid him on the stairs, clinging to his arm.

"Just look at papa, Estelle," cried the lovely young daughter. "How handsome he has grown since yesterday! I declare, I believe London smoke is healthier than country roses, after all. He is ten years younger than he was last week, that's certain. Do not you think so, cousin?"

The guilty pair, thus compelled, met each other's eyes with a smile in which there was some confusion.

Estelle's cheeks were ablaze, and even the earl grew suspiciously red.

But Clara was too innocent to suspect their secret through their conscious air; and in five minutes each was as composed as before.

Augusta came in with a great handful of flowers, which were a part of the morning's arrival from their country place, which she laid around the table by the various plates.

The earl selected a half-blown rose from his bunch, which he handed to Estelle, who sat at his left hand. She kissed it, and fastened it in the bosom of her white morning dress.

As she finished this little action she met Lord Harry's eyes.

He was himself hardly aware of how contemptuous was their look.

She smiled defiantly.

Only Harry observed the tenderness and gallantry of his father's manner towards the young lady, but he would not have noticed any change in his father's always kind attentions had Estelle not avowed the relationship existing.

"Poor father!" thought the young man to himself—"galled!"

The expression may not have been elegant, but it had the force of truth. "Galled" was just what had happened to that sharp man of the world, the Earl of Bramblethorpe.

A pretty girl had stolen upon him during an impressionable mood, and with flattering sentences and sweet looks had turned his angust head.

Then Lord Harry fell to thinking, by contrast, of his Agnes—how noble and good and unworldly she was—a creature as bright and as innocent as the mountain lakes, which had never mirrored anything but the heavens above them.

He thought also, with a fierce throb of mistrust and jealousy, of the six-foot mountaineer, the laird of Melrose.

Here was a rival more to be feared than the finest exquisites of St. James's.

Not that Agnes did, or could, or would love that mighty embodiment of Scotch obstinacy. But the laird had a prior claim on her, and in that lay the lover's danger.

"What is to be done?" Lord Harry asked himself.

He felt that he must know what was transpiring at Mrs. MacLeod's.

And still he had not a shadow of a right to intrude himself into that house and demand confession of its inmates.

His position appeared to him intolerable.

"He and I must settle this soon," he thought.

At least he could attack his enemy under cover of a call with the ladies of his family.

Gaining entrance under this innocent pretence, he could use his eyes and ears and perhaps his tongue.

"Angusta, pray do not neglect calling on Mrs. MacLeod to-day," he said as he arose from the table. "I hold myself in readiness to accompany you ladies at any hour you may set. You can then make your excuses for the evening, if you desire—such of you as are not going to the reception."

"We have a round of calls to make. We will go to Mrs. MacLeod's first, if you wish."

"I do—for I daresay I shall not care to make the 'round' with you. And—Angusta, please, make me up the most exquisite bouquet imaginable for Miss MacLeod. You have such taste."

"What shall the language of the flowers be?" asked his sister, archly.

"Make it as ardent as you please—flowers are not eloquent enough to tell half the story," he rejoined, very much in earnest under his seeming lightness.

He was not ashamed of his love for Agnes, nor anxious to keep it a secret from the family, which proved that he felt pretty certain of ultimate success in his suit, or he would have hidden his intentions until assured.

Indeed while Angusta was making up his bouquet he followed her about, telling her the whole story of his wooing of Agnes MacLeod.

"She loves me," he said, eagerly and proudly. "I know it. Do you think it would be right for her to marry that man?"

"It would be wicked!" said Lady Angusta, stontly, sympathizing with her brother to the very bottom of her affectionate heart. "Believe me, Harry, she will not hold out against you very long."

"You are a delicious comforter," said her brother, kissing her.

"As if there could be any comparison!" she exclaimed, proud of her brother's beauty and youth and rank.

Harry had always been perfect in her sisterly eyes. "She will not decide on our respective merits," he answered, rather ruefully. "With her it will be a question of duty."

"Does he love her, do you think?" queried the young lady, intensely interested in somebody else's love affair, although she had not, for one instant, forgotten her own.

"I should judge that he did," said Lord Harry, slowly. "Indeed, who could help loving Agnes that had any chance?"

"I do not know. Was that Mr. Douglass who came in?" asked Lady Angusta, the fingers with which she was arranging the flowers beginning to tremble.

"It was," replied Lord Harry, peeping through into the drawing-room. "Have you an engagement with him?"

"An engagement?" stammered Lady Angusta.

"To go out or stay at home either," answered the unconscious brother, unaware of the construction which her conscious heart had put upon his words.

"Oh, no—none at all. He simply said that he would call this morning. I shall tell him we are going to call on Miss MacLeod."

"He will desire to accompany us I presume. If he does he and I will go in my brougham, and you ladies can have the carriage to yourselves."

"Clara and auntie are not going, since we can make their excuses. There will be room for both of you."

The little conspirator was speaking in the interests of Mr. Douglass, who, she felt secretly sure, would prefer her company in the carriage to the pleasure even of riding behind Harry's fast horse.

Lord Harry went in to greet his friend; but his sister remained where she was—she knew very well that Mr. Douglass would soon come to her, and she felt her cheeks so warm that she waited a few minutes' grace to cool them.

It would appear to have been an affair of love-making in the family!

Where there is unmet beauty and youth there may generally be suspected some of that sly work, and the earl's home was brimful with youth and beauty—quite enough, one would have said, without his joining the company; but that widower never yet lived who thought himself too old for a young wife!

Lord Harry thought his friend Douglass rather dull that morning; he appeared preoccupied, but consented cordially to making the call on the MacLeods.

If Mr. Douglass was dull in the drawing-room he became very interesting when at last he managed to reach the little flower-sweet boudoir where Lady Angusta awaited him, as rosy as the blossoms over which she bent.

When he came back into the drawing-room, where Estelle was singing at the piano, and Harry was lounging on a sofa with a book, his eyes sparkled and his colour was high.

"She has given me permission to speak to her father. Do you know if the earl is still in the house?" he whispered to Lord Harry.

"Hu! is that so?" cried the latter, rising from the sofa in some excitement. "You have been so long making up your mind, Malcolm, that I'd given up the idea some time ago. I wish you success with all my heart. Father thinks a great deal too much of titles; but his friendship for you may plead in your behalf, as I believe it will."

"I was not long in making up my mind, Harry. You must remember that Lady Angusta has fairly grown up under my eye. I have been waiting the expansion of the bud; and, too, I will confess that I fear a refusal from the earl. With all our wealth and ancient name my branch of the family lack a title. I am a little proud, and if I thought your father would look upon it as a *maladresse* for Lady Angusta, even though he gave his consent, I should feel embarrassed."

"Pshaw! faint heart never won fair lady! By Jove, Douglass, if you know of my difficulties—but there, I shall not speak of them this morning. Go straight to the library. I believe my father is there writing his day's letters."

Estelle, filling the lofty room with the rich notes of her magnificent voice, heard nothing of this little colloquy, and Douglass crossed the hall to the library.

He lost a little of his fine colour as he entered at the bidding of its occupant; but he marched bravely to the earl's desk, and in a few and manly phrases made his wishes known.

The noble gentleman who heard him was manifestly disconcerted. He fidgeted with his pen, pushed his papers away and pulled them back, with his eyes bent on his desk.

"How much did you say you estimated your inheritance to be worth?" he finally inquired.

"Half a million pounds at the least, my lord. You know, of course, that many of my family do bear very high titles, although not the shadow of one has fallen to my share. My uncle, the Earl of Douglass, holds a rank equal to your own."

"I know, I know, 'tis a knightly race and a noble one. I like the blood, and I like you very much, indeed, Malcolm, still I had hoped that my eldest daughter would marry a man of high rank. She is entitled to such—"

"It is true, my lord. I will not press my claim," interrupted the young man, a little more fiercely than the occasion warranted.

The earl looked up at this with a quiet smile which made the other blush at his own impetuosity.

"You resign my daughter with great ease, it seems."

"No, no, no! I would fight for her, die for her, my lord, but my pride is, like your own, rather nettlesome."

"Did you assure me that you had Lady Angusta's preferences?"

"I do believe that she loves me, my lord. She has known me since she was a child," was the frank response.

"Go find her, and let me hear the confirmation from her own lips."

The young man felt that his cause was gained and went out to search for Lady Angusta, his heart throbbing with joy.

"We seem to have a contagious fever," laughed the earl to himself after the suitor had disappeared. "See, I have not secured myself a solace any too quickly. In a year or two I shall not have a child left to keep me company. As to Douglass—he's a royal good fellow, and wealthy enough if the worst come to the worst to take proper care of my daughter. There are plenty of lords and dukes less independent than he. The more quickly my children are well settled the sooner I shall cease to fret myself about my unhappy secret. I ought to be glad of this match since it is in every respect save one unexceptionable. I do hope Harry will marry a lady with a fortune of her own. He may some time need it desperately. If that were accomplished I should feel comparatively at ease. Those fatal letters! Who, who can have them? Why were they taken?"

His thoughts had gone back upon that haraming theme when they were again diverted by the appearance of the lovers, he now as bold as a lion, she blushing and frightened.

"Mr. Douglass has the presumption to insinuate that you love him, my dear. Is that so?" said the earl, good-humouredly.

"I declare I never told him so," she answered, smiling through her blushes. "But I fear that I have given him reason to infer it."

"And you would really wish to marry him?"

"Oh, papa!"

"Answer me!"

"I am in no haste!"

"When shall the wedding be?"

Lady Angusta lifted a sly glance at her lover.

"Whenever she is ready," he said, eagerly.

"Not before autumn—somewhere about Christmas, papa."

"Very well. We will talk of settlements and so on another day before long. I must finish my letters now."

They went away with spirits light as thistle-down. Mrs. Captain De Vere was in the drawing-room when they entered.

"Congratulations us. The earl has given his consent," cried Mr. Douglass, with a proud and fond look at his companion.

All the inmates of the room gathered about the happy pair.

"By George! I envy you!" sighed poor Lord Harry, thinking of his own hard case.

Estelle gave her congratulations with sincerity. But, as usual, she had a selfish reason for being pleased.

She was well aware that her position as wife of Earl Bramblethorpe would be easier to sustain with Lady Angusta in a home of her own.

"I, also, shall soon be receiving congratulations," she thought.

"This is all confidential in the family," said the fair fiancée. "We shall not be married for some months. Please wait until the preliminaries are arranged before you speak of it, all of you."

Estelle went back to her singing, Mrs. Captain De Vere to her fancy-work, and the lovers to a quiet corner of the sofa, where they whispered about such matters as interest affianced people.

Harry felt so lonely that he would have gone off for a ride about the park had not an early lunch been ordered, that they might begin, in good season, their round of calls.

After all his chafing impatience of the morning, imagine his disappointment when, upon reaching the MacLeods', he was told that the ladies were not at home.

Lord Harry had descended from the carriage and gone to the door himself.

Seeing him look as if it were a serious matter, the servant added that "The ladies had gone out with their relative from Scotland to visit some of the picture-galleries."

So there was nothing to do but leave cards and turn away.

It was a matter of no importance to the others, but to Harry it was a great trial.

It would be six—seven hours before he could decently appear at this door again. To him it seemed as many days.

The idea of Agnes going about with her cousin, showing him so much attention, was maddening.

CHAPTER VII.

It is better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all. Tennyson.

The most halting sun must set at last.

Harry thought the day had come to a standstill in order to prolong his suspense; but the sun did set, and the dark did deepen, and in due course of time he, with Estelle and his father, did drive to Mrs. MacLeod's fortnightly reception, and were welcomed by that peculiar lady with her usual lively cordiality.

The earl was certain to meet in those rather crowded and dingy rooms choice spirits of his own set, and was soon absorbed in conversation with another member of the House of Lords, on a subject which had been discussed in the House.

Animated conversation went on in all the corners; witty people were indulging in brilliant repartees, artists were talking on their favourite topics; while occasionally the hum would lull as some singer took his or her place at the piano.

"What splendid singing! She must be a professional!" remarked the lord with whom the earl was discussing politics.

"That is Miss Styles—my—a member of my family. She has a fine voice and a great deal of taste," replied the earl, colouring and pleased—colouring because he had come near saying, "My niece, Miss Styles," and pleased because he did not feel quite at ease about his sudden choice, and liked to have it confirmed by the presence of others.

Meantime Agnes and Lord Harry had met.

In the presence of that crowd their lips could not speak of what their thoughts were, but their eyes spoke silently.

His questioned her with a fiery, eager look; hers were sad, calm, earnest.

He read from their melancholy composure that her mind was made up—and against him.

MacLeod of Melrose had arrived in the very nick of time to upset his arguments, and to outweigh the effect of his passionate appeal with that strong, quiet, persistent claim of his which he would urge to the death.

Harry saw that.

As he dropped Agnes's cold hand he cast a quick glance about in search of those steel-blue eyes. He had not far to look.

MacLeod stood near at hand like a sentinel.

His whole demeanour said, at least to the young lord, "Touch her not! she is my property."

Brawny and rough as some huge watch-dog, who would snarl if any one came too near what he was set to guard, the Scotch laird hung about the beautiful woman, so fair and tender that she seemed rather made for a god than for a rough old mountaineer like him.

How fair she looked by contrast!—more beautiful than ever!

In that silver-blue satin dress and pearls she was dazzling.

Give her up to that brawny laird?—never!

Lord Harry flashed a fierce look at the man, who received it without a change of expression.

Then he remembered himself and bowed; the MacLeod of Melrose nodded.

His rival admitted to himself that there was something grand about this intruder, so different from the polished people of the world about him that many were the curious glances he attracted. He gazed with a defiant scorn at these soft-spoken Londoners. He evidently considered all their fair seeming but as "arts and wiles" of which he was proud to be ignorant. He was an honest man! He did not bow and scrape and grimace! Oh, no! nevertheless, it was a fact that in selfishness and egotism he transcended them all.

They acknowledged what real merit he had; he condemned them wholesale. MacLeod of Melrose held lords and dukes in high contempt. Yet his own arrogance was insufferable.

It was the result of his Scotch disposition, with isolation, and the want of that compassion for others which sometimes rubs away the sharp angles of such characters.

As to selfishness, his was immense! Holding tight to that right which his father had given him, he made that the excuse for dooming this young and beautiful woman to a lonely, un congenial sphere over which he should rule.

He had long regarded her as his property, and he was not going now to change his plan or give up his claims.

It made him angry to think that Agnes should doubt his power to make her happy. He considered himself quite competent to judge of that, as of all other matters. She was too young to take a matter of so much importance into her own hands. He should be remiss in duty if he did not compel her to do that

which her own dying father and himself thought best for her.

In his view London was full of danger and temptation; and a London beauty one of the "good as lost" women. It was not likely that he should allow Agnes to cherish her fancy for this young sprig of the aristocracy, and become as his wife exposed to all the follies of fashionable life. No! she must keep her contract with him! He had been too easy with her! If he had insisted on his rights she would have been his wife before this, and out of the way of such possibilities.

He was dangerously jealous, too. Feel as much scorn as he might for the handsome young lord, with his dainty gloved hands, his exquisite dress and his elegant manners, he was hotly jealous of him. Agnes preferred this "perfumed darling." This was what gave the steely glint to eyes which were pleasant and sunny enough when nothing crossed his will.

Lord Harry understood their cool assumption of triumph. The man impressed him, despite his knowledge of Agnes's love for himself, with a feeling of awe—as a mountain, bleak, rugged, and rocky, impresses by its impassive massiveness.

There was likely to be a fierce struggle for that white hand, of which an impetuous sculptor was just begging the great privilege of taking a cast—a hand which would never lack for suitors until its glorious owner was safely married away from her adorer.

The young lord's heart felt like a coal of fire under the calm, asserting stare of the older one.

He watched his opportunity and spoke to Agnes:

"Why does he look at me so? Agnes, you have not renewed your promise to him? Why do you not send him away?"

She turned pale under his anxious eye.

"He is visiting my aunt; I could not send him away," she answered.

"But he came solely to assert his power over you—to watch your sedition—to hold the rod over you. Agnes, I trust you will be true to our happiness in spite of him."

He saw a slight shiver pass over her; her glance drooped before his.

"Do not speak thus," she cried, in a sharp whisper; "I shall marry him—he will not let me go."

Lord Harry would have said some very bitter words, but others pressed about them, and their brief tête-à-tête was broken up.

He gained no other opportunity of speaking with her during the evening; the huge laird continued to glare upon the company as if calling them all to account, and before the evening was over Lord Harry had been asked if it could be possible that that rough laird was the intended husband of that peerless pearl of women, "Agnes the Fair!"

"A foolish rumour," he had answered; "he is her guardian;" for in his heart he had decreed that she should never marry James MacLeod.

It would be impossible to tell which of these two lovers would win the victory.

If Agnes had not considered her promise so binding there would have been no difficulty in deciding the matter.

As it was Lord Harry had his impetuous love to balance against the influence of that promise and against the cool, steadfast will of his rival.

But he had two powerful aides-de-camp—Agnes's own inclinations and the good will of Aunt MacLeod. Indeed, that lady raised a storm the morning after her reception.

Some one during the evening had also asked her, innocently, if there was an engagement between her nephew and niece, which she had denied with equal innocence, since neither party had, thus far, made her a confidant.

The question, however, had opened her eyes. She began to see into the motive of James's unexpected visit and of Agnes's low spirits. She was furiously out of temper about it.

She had set her heart upon her niece making a brilliant match, and had laughed in secret triumph to observe how soon she had brought an earl's son to her feet.

She thought as well of the MacLeods as any of the clan did; but she had too much good sense to regard that plain, middle-aged man as a proper husband for Agnes; besides, it was her pet ambition to see the girl's wonderful charms acknowledged, and to have her reside where she would receive the appreciation which she merited.

She smothered her wrath until morning. It was no place, at the breakfast-table, to speak for there were servants in the room; and it chanced that James went out for a walk immediately after. Then, as she could endure it no longer, she attacked Agnes, sitting alone in the pleasant morning-room.

"I was asked, last evening, if you were to marry your cousin. It seems such a ridiculous report has been started. I can't tell you how angry it made me."

"Why?" asked Agnes, with her eyes on the carpet.

"Why? You do not mean me to understand there's any truth in it?"

"Dear aunt, I know I should have told you of it long ago. I am sure I cannot explain why I did not. We were betrothed the night my father died."

Aunt MacLeod rose up out of her armchair, looking taller and larger than usual, in her surprise and wrath.

"If that is your taste, Mistress Agnes," said she, scornfully, "then I have been taking trouble for nothing. James, indeed! the both of you together hain't siller eno' to buy the wedding tocher. You must be over fond of stocks and stones—of rocky fields, bare floors, and porridge for breakfast! He's a lovesome man for a young girl like you, isn't he now? How do you excuse yourself, Niece Agnes, for keeping Lord Harry Bramblethorpe tied to your apron-strings? A coquette, eh?"

"I never kept him, aunt. I have avoided him all that was possible," said Agnes, in a low voice, her eyes still downcast and her face growing paler.

"Why have you avoided him?" cried the older lady, with admirable consistency. "A better lover you will never find, handsome as you are, nor a nobler-hearted, better-mannered, finer-looking young gentleman, and the only son of an earl. Why, you would be a countless some day! Think of that. His character above reproach—not one bad habit—and his sisters such sweet girls—and his smile enough to melt a stone—good Heavens! I wish I was a young lady again, with your hair and eyes and figure and complexion. He wouldn't ask me twice! Agnes, what are you crying about?"

"I am sure I do not know, aunt."

"Tell me, this minute, do you love your cousin?"

"Please don't ask me."

"Tell me, I say. Are you going to be so disrespectful to your own aunt as to refuse to answer a simple question like that? I demand an answer!"

"I do not love him, auntie—not one bit. But it is so wicked for me to say it," she said, wiping her eyes.

"Why is it wicked, child?" continued the aunt, looking immensely relieved.

"Because I promised papa to marry him, and I ought to love the man I marry."

"Fiddle-de-dee!" said Aunt MacLeod, snapping her thumb.

"Ought I not?" asked Agnes, looking up with her lovely blue eyes swimming in tears.

"You ought not to marry him—and, what's more, you shall not. I have said it."

"Oh, auntie, he will not give me up. I have asked him. I asked him yesterday. He said bluntly that if I could forget my promise to a dying parent he could not. He had told my father that he would care for me. I had been engaged to him over two years, and it was too late to talk of change because a gallant had turned my giddy brain."

"Ha! the selfish brute! Now, Agnes, tell me, has Lord Harry actually spoken to you about his feelings?"

The young lady's blush answered for her.

"You told him that you were betrothed to your cousin?"

"Yes, auntie," she said, very faintly.

"I did not think you were such an idiot. How did he take it?"

"He thought it would be wrong for me to marry a man whom I did not and could not love."

"It would be abominable! Lord Harry has excellent judgment for one so young."

Agnes smiled, unhappy as she felt—she did not think her lover's judgment had much to do with his warm arguments.

"The very first time I have the opportunity I shall express my opinion to him. I shall tell him that he has my full consent—that I have put my foot down—you shall never wed with your cousin. As for James, I'll give him a piece of my mind the moment he comes in. If he don't pack his valise and start for Scotland this afternoon it won't be because I don't make him feel that his place is better than his company."

"Oh, auntie! your own nephew! I cannot blame him so very much as you do. After my father betrothing us, I suppose he gave way to his feelings, and allowed himself to love me more and more. I am about the only young lady he has ever associated with, and thus, I suppose, he thinks more highly of me than I deserve. He is quiet and cold—but his feelings are deep."

"Deeply selfish," interpolated Aunt MacLeod.

"I suppose we are all selfish in our loves," said Agnes, thoughtfully. "Auntie," she said, suddenly, "I would give worlds, if I had them, if my dear father had not imposed that promise upon me. He thought it was for my good—it was a cruel mistake—but I must abide by it."

"It is never too late to mend. Do not you think, if your father is aware of what is now transpiring,



[ESTELLE'S NEWS.]

that he is just as eager that you should consult your true happiness and welfare as he then was? If he could speak to you he would say—"Child, marry the lover more suited to you—be happy your own way. I was rash to meddle in your future, which I could not possibly foresee."

"Do you think so?" asked Agnes, clasping her hands in her earnestness. "When I am away from him I feel so too, aunt, but when in his presence he seems to compel me to view the matter in his light."

"Then keep out of his company. There, he is coming in. I'm not afraid to give him a piece of my mind."

"Oh, may I run away, Aunt MacLeod?"

"Yes—away with you; I shall not mince my words, and your tender feelings might be shocked. You seem to pity him far more than poor Lord Harry. If any heart has to be broken you prefer to break that of your young lover—who will have more years to suffer in than your old cousin. I don't understand such tenderness."

Agnes darted out of one door as MacLeod of Melrose came in at the other—rushing upstairs and holding her hands over her ears, as she sat panting and frightened in her chamber; for her room was just over that where the two MacLeods were disputing in no dulcet tones.

They must have had a grand quarrel, for it was not half an hour before James came to the foot of the stairs and shouted out her name, instead of sending a servant to knock at her door.

As she came down, timid and pale, he confronted her, his ruddy face actually white, and his eyes blazing.

"A MacLeod has insulted a MacLeod in her own house," he said, "and I am in haste to get out from under her roof. I'll bid you good-bye for to-day, lass; but mind you I've not left the town—and I shall not leave it until I take you back with me; I'll have nae mair o' this fooling! So you had best be thinking o' setting the day—the sooner the more convenient for me who will be sorely homesick at a London inn. Shall I say a week from to-day, Agnes? Come, I've waited long enough."

"A week!" stammered Agnes.

"It's all the time I'll give ye, my girl—and too much at that. And mind ye play me no tricks with the earl's son. Ye are mine by yer father's will, and I hold ye to it. And now farewell till I contrive a meeting wi' ye outside this house."

He flung his strong arm around her and almost crushed her against his breast, kissing her—then strode away, banging the hall door behind him.

Agnes sat down on the stairs, trembling and weak,

It was the first time he had ever taken a kiss or embrace; she felt that he had done it to assert his ownership. He had ordered her to be ready for the wedding in one week. The power of habit asserted itself. She had so long felt that she must and should some day marry him—so long mutely acknowledged his claim—that now she seemed to have no power to resist the influence of the past. The fatal chain tightened. Its pressure was cruel—terrible! yet she did not think that she could break it.

"Oh, I must! I must!" she sighed, dreadingly. "The sooner it is over the better it will be for all of us. Oh, father, father!"

Her aunt came out into the hall, and seeing her crouching on the stairs burst into a triumphant laugh.

You should have seen how angry I made him, Agnes dear! I heated him up to a white heat—not for any other purpose but to get rid of him. I was laughing in my sleeve through it all. He declared he would not bide another hour under my roof—which was exactly what I desired, my dear. He'll go back to Melrose now, darling, and you'll not be fretted any more wi' him at present. So cheer up and look your prettiest. Go, dress for a drive in the park. It's a fine day and we may meet some of your friends."

The lady was in excellent spirits; not so Agnes, who went to her room, and dressed herself, and descended to the carriage, and was driven out, feeling all the time as if labouring with some oppressive dream.

They met Lord Harry on horseback, looking his best, for he was a graceful rider. Agnes's heart grew faint and cold as she met his anxious, half-constrained look. She bowed mechanically in answer to his graceful salute; he was about to pass on, but Mrs. MacLeod stopped the carriage and held him for some moments in gay conversation. She gave him very plainly to understand that he was a favourite of hers, and had the freedom of her house, while Agnes sat listening, painfully conscious of her intentions, pale and nearly silent.

Before the carriage moved on a huge figure on a great gray horse went lumbering by—MacLeod of Melrose—who rode, as he did all things, with an awkward energy. He touched his hat to Agnes, but did not look at the other two.

"I have made my nephew angry, and he has left me," smiled Mrs. MacLeod. "The fact is, he was too big for my little house."

Lord Harry looked eagerly at her companion, who would not meet his glance, appearing absorbed in the button of her glove. When he rode away he felt strangely gay and light-spirited, despite Agnes's

constraint. Her aunt favoured him—his rival was going!

But ere he had completed the circuit of the drive the great gray horse thundered up beside him, and MacLeod, just touching his hat, bent towards him, saying:

"Dinna be too lavish o' your attentions wi' Mistress Agnes MacLeod. She will be my wife a week from to-day, and she canna require any gallantries betwixt this and that, saving such as are shown by her own betrothed husband. D'y'e understand?"

"I confess that I do not," replied Lord Harry, a gentleman, even through the cold surprise and haughty anger that seized him. "I was not aware that a bride-elect was cut off from the courtesies of her friends."

"Nay, nay—only from the suit of her lovers!" said the other, roughly, and with that he went galloping off, giving the young lord no chance to reply to his rudeness.

He had given Lord Harry a wound from which he was not likely soon to recover. He rode on now wearily, with bent head, scarcely recognizing his acquaintances.

"Married in one week!" he repeated, over and over.

He felt tired of life, tired of home and friends—everything.

It did not seem possible to go home and meet his friends as if nothing had happened; there was not one charm left in the whole bright world.

He spurred his horse out upon the road which led away into the country. For miles and miles he rode along the villa-lined ways, half city, half country, until he got out into comparative seclusion.

Then he urged on his animal with all the eagerness of his own restlessness, until the brave horse was in danger of being over-ridden.

At last, chancing to realize his horse's condition, he turned and walked him dismally back the long road, arriving at home at dark, faint, tired and forlorn.

He felt that he could not again approach Agnes after the insult thrown at him by her cousin. His pride was in arms.

And so it happened that all that long, miserable week—insufferably miserable to both—he did not call upon Agnes.

She ought to have congratulated herself that he did not, since she had made up her mind to go home with James as his wife; but, so curiously contradictory is human nature, she did not feel glad to escape a last interview with Lord Harry.

(To be continued.)



[LENA'S LITTLE HEAVEN.]

ELGIVA;

OR,
THE GIPSY'S CURSE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"The Snapt Link," "Evelyn's Plot," "Sybil's Inheritance," &c., &c."

CHAPTER XLVI.

Though justice be thy plea, consider this,
That in the course of justice none of us
Should see salvation. We do pray for mercy,
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
The deeds of mercy.

"WELL, prince, I have kept you pretty correctly informed of all that has happened in your absence," observed Harold Farino, as he and the German noble paced the lone glades of the dark woods that faintly recalled to the prince the sombre forests of his native land. "And yet," he added, "I suspect you can but dimly comprehend the full import of all that has occurred, nor even realize all the changes that have been so strangely accomplished."

The prince gave a sharp, penetrating look at his companion ere he replied:

"I have a pretty shrewd idea, Harold, that there has been as much private revenge as public duty in your conduct in this miserable business. Certainly you are right so far that the scene has been as transformed as if one of the dark spirits of the Hartz Mountains had had some share in what took place. Death and disappearance and fairy-like reversal of rank and birth have been indeed the agents, but I suspect—yes, Harold, I more than suspect the hand that has pulled the strings. And," he added, "mark me, I believe that you have in a great measure used the powers entrusted to you, and an agency that has a grand if mysterious object for its constitution, to bring about trivial and unjustifiable results. And it was to learn this from you, as my subordinate, according to our unchanging rules, that I summoned you here this morning to a privacy that no one dare to violate uncalled for and unpunished."

Harold had listened with a cold and unflinching mien to the solemn warning thus conveyed, though there was, indeed, no lack of respect or attention in the demeanour he preserved.

"Prince," he said, calmly, "you know full well that the very essence of our constitution is an entire secrecy and a perfect subordination to the rules of our superiors. But in this case, and this alone, have I ever reserved to myself the right to act independently, although in entire accordance with the principles of our noble guild. Yes," he added, with a kind of loftiness in his air which was almost awe-striking to the beholder, "prince, you are a man, and I believe

from my heart of a nobler nature, a more sympathizing spirit than the majority of your class, and you will understand that I, though but a Zingara by station, have yet as lofty descent even as a nobleman like yourself—yes, and that I may have feelings to be outraged and honour to be wounded as well as you and your titled order. Therefore," he continued, seeing that the prince did not interrupt him, "therefore I will trust you in a measure with the history of my life and the causes of my conduct; though the whole secret must not be revealed till the bitter end, and events are working rapidly and surely to the consummation that will at length accomplish and reveal the power of right over might, truth over falsehood and weakness over strength."

The prince listened with something of incredulous curiosity to the Zingara's impassioned speech.

"All avails little, save truth and obedience, Harold, and remember that, although the Vehm may countenance and support its members in every action that carries out and enforces its rules, there is no sanction given to any needless cruelty or oppression. Now, if you choose, after this notice, go on. I am ready to listen, and, for many reasons, I will be slow to condemn where I have any excuse for acquittal."

Harold walked on in silence for a brief moment. Then he suddenly cleared his throat like a man preparing for a desperate effort, and, in a low, concentrated tone, began the tale:

"Prince Charles, you have known me long; but the time whence my story dates was in your early youth, ere you had any share in the secret pact which is at once our strength and our danger. In those days I was different indeed from the stern, gloomy, harsh being you have seen me. I was but a Zingara, but my travels in foreign lands had given me learning in some things that are quite unknown to those far higher in rank. And I was strong in my will as in my passions, and eager in all which came in my way to acquire, or to love. It so happened that a family joined the camp to which I belonged who changed by their presence my whole future life, and, perhaps I should add, their own. They were a mother and two daughters, Spanish by birth, and with all a Spaniard's warmth and grace and beauty, even though their humble station prevented their gifts being cultivated. One of them you have seen, and, even though mature years and sorrow have changed and impaired her beauty, you could imagine that she had once been handsome and noble looking as any of her sex. But the other—the younger of the two—was far more lovely and winning. Indeed, I have never yet seen one who can even come near to her in such gifts as win man's heart for ever, or turn it to gall and bitterness."

"I loved her, as a passionate, untutored nature

alone can love. For, prince, believe me, the dwellers in cities, schooled by rules and trammelled by forms, can never feel as we sons of nature and freedom can. And thus my whole soul was hers ere she or I even dreamed of aught but the untutored companionship of our tribe's manners and habits. But when at last I spoke to her of love she did not refuse or shrink back, and as there was nothing to hinder our bridal, and my rank in the tribe was high, no one murmured at my carrying off the beauty of the camp."

"But it so happened that I was forced to leave her, sent on a mission by the powers you wot of, and when I returned what think you I found to greet me? A dishonoured betrothed, an unwedded mother, and that Oscar, Count Arnheim, was the guilty author of all the misery and shame that was thus brought on me and mine. Prince, you know the consequences of such a crime among the fraternity to which I belong; and, though my wrath was equal to my love, I resolved to save, if possible, the unhappy victim from the terrible punishment she had incurred. Her sister, the noble-hearted woman who, it may be, merited more than her fairer sister love and honour, had courage to dare the ordeal, which you know to be so fearful, and to become the guardian and surety of the victim."

"Then, when all was supposed to have blown over and been forgotten, Oscar of Arnheim formed another marriage, with one suitable to him in rank and wealth, and fair and young and good, so people said. But what of that? She must suffer the doom of her lord; and at that hour when her joy and his pride were at the full my voice spoke the curse that has been so long and terribly fulfilled on the babe and his ancestors and race. And when time passed, and somewhat softened my wrath and my unhappy betrothed's grief and shame, I took her as my wife, and as such saved her for the time from the vengeance she deserved."

The prince, who had listened with calm and deep attention to the long, low, earnest narrative, now for the first time broke silence.

"Harold, it was a noble deed, and so far I honour and acquit you; but—"

"But it did not avail," said the man, with firm-set teeth. "She bore to me a babe—a girl; but it did not satisfy her heart. She pined and murmured and sank, till my rage was again kindled and I well nigh swore to withdraw my protection and yield her up to punishment. But then again Marian stepped forward to her sister's shelter and guard. She promised to keep her from my sight and my presence, and to guard her from the slightest chance of ever again seeing her false lover. I trusted her, and nobly has she performed her vow; albeit in one

thing she deceived me, it might be from undue devotion to her sister's claims. It was she who arranged the substitution of my child for Count Arnheim's who had then succeeded to his cousin's heritage, and, from my ignorance of that, much that need not have happened of woe and crime has taken place. I had sworn that the young Ludovic should never wed one of the race, and he, as you know, took the vows that bound him in bondage to the rules and made him subject to the penalties of our pact," he continued, in a low tone. "And now, prince, you have a brief sketch that may give you a key to the conduct which has perplexed and displeased you since your connection with this doomed race."

The prince walked on in profound silence for some minutes, and his tone was grave and doubting when he at last replied to the Zingara's appeal.

"I grant that you have had ample cause for vengeance and for vengeance, Harold," he said, at last, "but, as too often happens, you have cruelly brought on the innocent soul the punishment of the wicked. And I—I cannot plead altogether innocence of the passions and the injustice I condemn. But I must think ere I finally form my judgment on your conduct, and rest ere I decide: I must know what is to be the fate of the most—of all but the most injured sufferer in this miserable affair. I mean your daughter, Harold—she who was once the Lady Elgiva, the bride I strove to win—the lover of the unhappy Ludovic. You can scarcely expect her to conform to your habits, to behave as a child would to the gipsy chief."

Harold's brow darkened.

"Of course you have long since relinquished any idea of one you sought to win, prince? It was a degradation to wed even the fair and gently nurtured daughter of the ancient race."

"Were she again restored to her former rank I would never dream of such an impossibility, Harold," returned the prince, firmly. "That was at an end long since, and, if I ever thought of such an alliance, it would not be with the unhappy betrothed of your victim. But still I cherish an interest in her and grieve for her sufferings. What would you say to her finding a refuge in my household, far away from the scene of her grief and her dangers? There would be no risk in it," he added, with a somewhat impertinent look of scorn. "None. I, for one, would probably never even seek an interview with her, and there are staid and trusty matrons in my household who would obey my orders to shelter her."

Harold started, as if the idea was too strange and wild to be considered for a moment.

Then he replied:

"I must think, ay, and consult others, prince, before I can decide on so strange a scheme. Lena is for the present occupied in a task from which time alone can release her. And till she is free I grant that it may be well for Elgiva to be placed in a home that it may be safe and honourable. But," he added, in a more subdued tone, "it must be where she shall not be allowed to rebel against fate, nor to cast herself into any wild and dangerous connection. It will at least be well for you to pronounce your verdict on my conduct ere you volunteer to protect my child."

"Where is she now?" asked the nobleman, without replying to the bitter remark.

"It matters not; she will be forthcoming at the proper time—and she is in safe and honourable keeping now. I scarcely believe I am bound to make such private matters patent even to you, my lord and prince."

"That remains to be seen," was the severe retort.

"Harold, I blame you while I pity, but I am myself scarcely so entirely without blame as to visit on you so severely your imprudence and rashness. And, for the sake of one who is more of an angel than even the unhappy daughter of your race, I will strive to arrange for the winding up of this guilty and passionate plot—so that there may be less misery and more justice than at present appears possible either for the guilty or the innocent. In a few days you shall hear from me again. Till then let nothing be done to change the aspect of matters as they now stand."

And with a cold inclination of the head Prince Charles walked from the spot.

CHAPTER XLVII.

Why quak'st thou so
"Cause thou straight must lay thy head
In the dust? Oh, no,
The dust shall never be thy bed,
A pillow for thee will I bring
Stuffed with down of angel's wing.

"I HAVE kept my promise, Lena," said Prince Charles, some day or two after this interview with the girl's uncle. "Did you doubt me from its long delay?" he added, with a quick, penetrating glance at the girl's expressive face.

He had entered so quickly and noiselessly that she had scarcely been disturbed by his approach from her employment at the moment.

And a pretty, graceful tableau presented itself to the German noble as he paused to gaze ere he had spoken to declare his presence.

Lena was sitting on the low pile of cushions that formed a luxurious but picturesque ottoman for her repose.

And on the only couch that the singular apartment contained there reposed Tessa's still beautiful figure.

The younger of the two was reading to her from a volume which rested on her knees, and which needed small attention to declare its character as the Holy Book.

The sweet, rich voice, with the peculiar accent that it owed to the foreign lands where the girl's early years had been passed, gave peculiar charm to the soothing promises, the lofty precepts that the volume contained.

And Tessa's hand rested on Lena's neck, as if to connect herself with one so pure and soothing as that young comforter and reader.

There must have been a singular power in Lena's temperament to exercise such a glamour, as it might be called, over the gentle but half-crushed and helpless invalid and the strong, hard, vigorous nature of that unscrupulous noble.

Yet both seemed to be awayed by her will, the very power of her gentle, holy influence.

The sound of the prince's voice arrested, of course, the reading that had been going forward.

And Lena quietly took the hand of her companion from her shoulder, and, placing the book on the couch at her side, uttered a few soothing words, and then advanced to meet the new guest with irrepressible eagerness in her speaking features.

"Will your highness be so good as to speak German?" she said, softly. "I can understand enough to know what you would tell me, and it is best that you helpless one should be kept ignorant of all that might bring danger on her innocent head."

"And where did you learn my language, Lena?" asked the prince, in some surprise. "I hardly expected such learning in a—"

"A poor gipsy girl, you would say," returned Lena, with a half-smile. "There is no great wonder or difficulty in the matter, prince. I have been brought up in too many lands to have a country or a language. And, though I may be ignorant of best part of such learning, I can speak and understand your tongue and French and Spanish, as well as English. But this is idle," she exclaimed, impatiently. "You promised to come when you had tidings, prince. Tell me is it safe? Is it finished?"

And her eyes asked more plainly than words the question on her lips.

"If I were dealing with ordinary maidens I should keep them in suspense, and receive answer to my question ere I satisfied theirs," returned the prince, calmly. "But you are not like most of your sex. Lena, and deserve to be treated like a true and rational being. You may be at rest so far as your rescued charge is concerned. Juan, or Ludovic, or whatever you call him, is safe and well and cared for."

Lena clasped her hands in grateful joy.

"Prince, how can I thank you, how speak all the gratitude of my heart?" she said, her face regaining some of its native bloom and lightness at the news.

"By putting some trust in me, Lena," he returned.

"In our first days of acquaintance you shrank from and repulsed me as if I was a venomous snake. Are you changed in your feelings now?"

Lena's vivid blush might have been more satisfactory than many more decided words in the opinion of most men of the world.

But the prince had too accurate an idea of all the complicated circumstances connected with Lena's history and mood to infer all that in other relations might have been supposed lawful and safe.

"Your highness cannot doubt it," she said, at last, her voice retaining all its truthful ring that brought such irresistible conviction with it. "I owe you a deep, deep debt of gratitude now, and, besides, I did not do you justice then. I thought you hard, unscrupulous, and terrible," she added, naively. "I see now that I was wrong in such ideas."

"No, Lena, no—you were right, absolutely right," he returned, resolutely. "It is I who am changed, not your instincts that were wrong, and can you not guess why, and how that can be, Lena? I will tell you," he continued, seeing she did not speak. "It is your doing, your work. It was the strange love you inspired, the power of your true, brave nature; the disdain you showed for me who was apparently so far above you, that did the work. Mark me, Lena," he went on, vehemently, "and you loved this unfortunate victim of his own or others' folly, had your sacrifices and your heroisms been displayed for a lover; then it would not have irritated and wounded me, and made me rather despise than honour your interested devotion. But when I could see the purity of your generous bravery, the steadfast, lofty scorn for what would have tempted almost any other maiden, then my very love for you raised my own nature. And I am here this day to tell you this, and to probe once again your feelings toward

me. Lena, speak truthfully, as I know you will, and kindly, lovingly as I desire."

The girl's face flushed and paled by turns.

There was evidently a content in her inward soul that was certainly different from the resolute disdain and disgust with which she had before reasoned to such words.

"It is not worthy of you—it is an insult to me—to speak such words," she said, falteringly.

"No, Lena, you mistake," he said, hastily; "do not do yourself or me such injustice. It is no dishonourable love I offer to you. I could give you hand as well as heart, even were the love of my order to forbid any public avowal of the fact. I would make you my wife if you will consent to the bond. And that is no light thing for one of my birth and habits to say. Even the heiress of Count Arnheim could not have been thought more than a fitting bride for the Prince Charles of Merta. And yet I ask you from my very soul to occupy that place—to let me call you mine, my lawful, honoured wife."

Certainly he spoke truly.

It was a strange homage to pay to one so lowly and so obscure, so little nurtured in the world's ways—a struggle must indeed have warred in his feudal-bred nature ere he could even have brought himself to contract in secret a marriage that would in any case keep him from other and more suitable and lofty ties.

Lena knew it; all inexperienced as she was, her instincts guided her right, as she read the working features of the prince and listened to the tones of his agitated voice.

It was not in woman to resist the flattery of such a homage nor the grateful memory of the service he had rendered to her.

But still she did not hesitate, nor did she in truth feel that yearning love, that deep longing for the goal offered to her which might have made the sacrifice more difficult and painful than it actually was.

"No, prince, no," she said, firmly. "It is impossible; you must know and feel it. I comprehend all you would say, and the sincerity of your intentions, but I am proud, though only a poor Zingara girl, and I had rather be an honest and acknowledged peasant than the hidden wife of a prince."

"Then it is that only, fair Lena?" returned the prince, eagerly. "Were it possible you would assent on condition it was a public bridal?"

"No, I do not even say that," returned Lena, firmly. "I am grateful, prince, but I do not—I never did love any one in that way. Only," she added—"only, I do not conceal that I am very different to what I once was in my opinion of you, prince, and I am very, very grateful, and I honour you with a never-failing regard."

"And if it were so, if I could consistently with honour and safety say to you, Lena, I offer you the rank and honour of a princess, I will proudly and publicly display you as my bride, what then, Lena? Would you come? would you grace the splendid home and station I could offer to you?"

She gave a quick glance at the wondering and half-alarmed Tessa, whose eyes were fixed on them with the startled, anxious look they ever wore when any one save her young guardian was near.

And the glance seemed to resolve any doubts that the dazzling proposal might have induced.

"No," she said, "no. My word is pledged, and my duty is plain. So long as that sufferer lives, to rely on my care, and my dear, injured Juan does not enjoy his rights in safety and in peace, I will never take other ties on myself nor hamper my freedom to devote myself to their service. Prince Charles," she added, more hurriedly, "believe me; I am not ungrateful; I know all you would sacrifice for me, I know all the struggles that you must have endured on my behalf before you could have come to this generous resolve. But it cannot be; only, if it is true that you have such feelings for the poor Zingara, if you desire to secure and deepen the esteem and regard I am learning to feel for you, then I would implore you to watch over Juan's safety and welfare, and preserve him from his foes. Oh, it is too dreadful," she exclaimed, clasping her hands in agony; "only to think of what he has suffered and the danger in which he still lives. Prince, for the sake of all that is just and generous and good, I implore you to save him from these secret dangers that surround him."

The nobleman placed his hand gently on Lena's clasped palms, and held them for a few moments in his clasp.

"My generous, noble girl," he said, "you have indeed worked far greater benefits to me than any I can return to you. The day may yet come when we shall understand each other better; and when the barrier that now divides us will be removed. But till then go on in your noble path of duty and honour and I will not fail you in the time of your need. No, not if my own rank or life were to be the forfeit."

"And—will you—that is, shall I see you again?" she asked, beseechingly. "My mind is ever harassed with the terrible thought that Juan may yet have fallen in the power of his enemies."

The prince gave a scornful look that recalled for the moment his old haughtiness of bearing.

"They would be rash who would touch any one under my keeping," he said, proudly. "Be at rest, Lena," he added, more gently. "I have not been such a blunderer as not to insure the safety of one who has been so terribly menaced in former times, and though I may not and dare not reveal to you any of the secrets of this power to which I belong I can at least assure you this much that whoever touched the very hairs of Juan's head would rue the act that placed his own life in more than jeopardy. But time alone can clear up any mystery that hangs over the matter. Long ere any such catastrophe occurs we shall meet again. Keep my secret, Lena, as inviolably as you have done your own noble deeds. May the Heaven whom you trust in watch over and bless my only love."

He pressed her hand to his lips, gave one long, earnest look as if imprinting her features on his memory, and then turned slowly, and with his usual cold, proud bearing, from the spot.

Lena for the first time in her life was conscious of a strange blank when he was gone. Did it arise in the first dawning of maiden love? She at least did not suspect such a cause for her dull depression of spirits.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

Thou proud Gethina, hope no more
To be implored or woo'd,
Since by thy scorn thou dost restore
The wealth my love bestow'd:
And thy disdain too late shall find
That none are fair but who are kind.

The winter had passed slowly and drearily away for the new heiress of Arnisheim.

Even in her splendour and her dignity she was alone and desolate, devoid of friends and love and companionship.

True Lord Easton was still her constant and, as was presumed, her betrothed suitor. But the proud, wayward nature of the girl revolted from this that was rather a clog than a siren savor round her haughty soul.

In the waywardness of her nature this very certainty, the argument, the threats that had been used to induce her to bind herself to the marquis perversely made her chafe and rebel against the fate that in many circumstances would have been one most coveted and most valued.

"I will not thus be led to the slaughter," she muttered, on one bright April day, that recalled to her the gay festivities of the previous year in the metropolis. "At least I will enjoy one period of triumph. I will spend one season in the height of liberty and glory, and then it will be time enough to cement the bonds which are strangely hateful and irksome."

There was but one step to be taken for the accomplishment of her wish.

The Duchess of San Alva would of course gladly conduct the chaperonage she had begun, and to her the application was quickly made and as quickly responded to.

Before Marian Oliver, who had disappeared on one of her mysterious errands, returned, the wayward heiress had concluded her scheming and was settled in her old house at Belgrave Square, under the care of the triumphant and fashionable foreigner who had already been instrumental in her former prestige.

It was one of the most brilliant of the queen's drawing-rooms, and Amice had insisted on being presented in spite of certain objections that the wiser and more cautious chaperones could not restrain.

"My dear child, remember that your cousin's fate has not yet been fully ascertained," she said, "and imagine the scandal that would take place were you to be presented in your present station and before the next season had been stripped of its honours. Better remain in dim publicity, in shaded light, till all is more certain, and then burst out in your full splendour."

"Before then I shall certainly have taken another name," returned Amice, imperiously. "Either Lord Easton or some more eligible suitor will be my husband before that happens. I may as well enjoy what ought to be my right, even if that phantom cousin of mine were to emerge once more. Of course it would be a most extraordinary thing for me to be in London society without being formally presented. Duchess, it must really be," she added, with half-cooing, half-haughty determination.

As usual the imperious, beautiful creature had her way, even as almost since childhood she had ever ruled those within her reach.

A splendid toilet was prepared, and the family jewels of the Chetwodes were drawn from the banker's iron chest to deck the fair form of the young heiress.

Very magnificent and dazzling did she look in her costly attire, which was but a decking forth of the brightest and most perfect loveliness that the arts of jewellery, modistes, and subterfuges could

As she sat in the carriage beside her stately chaperone, waiting for the long, weary line of carriages to put down their burden, the chief attraction of the gazing crowd appeared to be her proud, high-bred, graceful beauty.

"She's a real one," said one of the crowd. "I've warrant there's no sham about her, nor her pretty stones either. Eh, Susan?" he added, turning to a sharp-looking dame at his side.

"Hush, hush, Joey," she returned. "Don't you know that's the heiress there's been such a to-do about, and was brought up as a gipsy, and—see—I do believe that's one of them near us now."

She turned a half-troubled look to a young, dark, singularly dressed man at their side, whose attention was as riveted on Amice as their own had been.

Perhaps he heard the whispered words, for in another moment he, who in truth was the youth Bertie, had disappeared with a half-sneering look on his dark features.

"It may not be for long," he muttered, "not for long. The higher the precipice the more fearful is the fall."

But the proud Amice heeded no such fear. Proudly and gracefully she bent before royalty—she who had in her early childhood been playfully styled the "Gipsy Queen," and deemed it no slight honour to be so entitled.

Now the wreath or the gay turban that marked the woodland sovereign was exchanged for the jewelled and priceless crown on that royal lady's brow, and the turfed throne had a substitute in the draped and velvet seat that supported the sovereign in her weary duty.

But the object that interested her more than all the splendour round was a tall, dark man, with a noble mien, and a breast well nigh covered with orders, whose position in the diplomatic circle was one that proved him to be one of no ordinary rank.

But it was not the dress alone, nor the dignified port of this individual that attracted the attention of Amice. It was the evident and ardent admiration that beamed in the eyes of the illustrious foreigner for herself as they were riveted on her lovely, graceful form during the brief ceremony of presentation.

Although it was of course impossible for him to leave his place in the circle to approach or to follow her, she could perceive that while she slowly proceeded from the room he did not remove his gaze to admire any of the succeeding debutantes.

It was clear that he was at any rate completely fascinated by her loveliness, or he would not have allowed the fair debutantes of the hour to escape his critical attention during their progress.

"Amice, my dear, were you not already betrothed, I should congratulate you on the conquest you seem to have made of one of the celebrities of the day," said the duchess, when they were once more in the carriage and en route homewards. "The Prince de Moskwa has been the aim of half the beauties of our own and other countries, for he is a complete cosmopolitan in his habits. But he has never yet been sufficiently answered to take a princess to grace his estates, or to perform the honours of the embassy, which have hitherto been fulfilled by a sister."

The blood rushed impetuously to Amice's cheeks. "Then you know him, duchess?" she said, with an affected carelessness.

"Certainly; there are few foreigners of distinction whom I do not number as acquaintances at any rate," was the reply. "It is possible that the prince might even present himself at my saloons to-night. But do not be foolish, Amice," she continued. "There will be no possible chance of the prince ever considering the claims of a mere debutante like yourself. He will send far more knowledge of the world, and more acknowledged position, in a bride even were he to think of one at the eleventh hour. Lord Easton is decidedly as eligible a partner as any girl even of your pretensions could desire. I shall certainly give up the slightest interest in your affairs should you attempt any degrading, useless flirtations with any one but your betrothed husband," she added, coldly. "It is so dreadful to even think of such a scandal."

Amice made no response, save by a half-bitter, half-triumphant smile, and in a few minutes more the carriage stopped with its fair burden at their home.

The saloons of the duchess were crowded on that night, partly from the fact that she was most decidedly the fashion, but yet more from the magnet she possessed in the beautiful heiress whom she had that day presented to the gay world in her new name and rank.

Still the only guest of any real interest to the young Amice did not appear.

Stars and orders were to be seen flashing in different directions, but they did not belong to the fine figure and mature but striking features of the ambassador prince.

Amice had withdrawn into a small, fairy-like boudoir that had been converted into a sort of floral bower for the night, and thrown herself carelessly on a crimson silk ottoman, that was half concealed in the wreath of evergreens and hothouse plants and rose blossoms which entirely hid the walls of the apartment.

She was half inclined to desert the crowded scene in the wilful waywardness of her disappointment. The old free, lawless habits of the Zingara combined with the spoilt and haughty pride of the lovely heiress to prompt such a caprice.

She half smiled at the blank wonder her absence would create in the assembly of which she was the centre and the attraction as she glanced round at the small door which would give her an unnoticed means of disappearance.

But ere she again looked round from the hidden portal a voice perfectly unknown, but yet with a strong foreign accent, and a rich tone that rarely belongs to an English throat, sounded in her ears.

"Lady Amice, may I hope that you will pardon a not altogether unknown individual for addressing you without a formal introduction?"

Looking up suddenly, she saw the remarkable-looking ambassador who had attracted her notice in the presence chamber.

Despite her haughty self-possession, she could not suppress a tell-tale blush and start for a moment, but ere she replied all such weakness had vanished from her mind.

"I can scarcely resist it," she said, "since I am already acquainted with the Prince de Moskwa's name and position, but yet it would have been easy to have obtained a more regular introduction," she added, with a slight reproach in her tone.

"And so have brought some troublesome intruder on our privacy," he resumed, "and deprived myself of the exquisite pleasure of a few moments' conversation with one so fresh and young. It must be a fairy-like scene to you, all these novel wonders," he added, glancing round. "It is quite refreshing to find one who has not been tutored all her life to expect and to look on them with indifference."

The girl started angrily. "I scarcely understand you, prince," she said, proudly.

"Ah, it is very easily comprehended," he returned, coolly. "You can scarcely suppose that the history of one so distinguished as yourself is unknown, and I can only account for the rare fascinations that pervade you by the circumstances of your early life. It is but a new attraction, fair lady, not one to be acquired nor despised."

Amice scarcely could read this practised man of the world aright.

Was he indeed really captivated by her beauty and her grace; or was it a veiled insult to an unpractised and untrained debutante?

But his next words decided the question.

"You can scarcely imagine how weary we hardened citizens of the world get of all the formal training of the code of fashion. If anything has hardened me against the artillery of beauty and grace it has been that one fact. I have been, I fear, like the Baron of Thiermain who has been waiting for some impossible maiden who could combine every imaginable charm, little dreaming such one might burst on his senses suddenly and unthought."

Amice's cheeks were burning now, and her eyes bent on the ground to hide not their confusion but their triumph.

The next words of the prince confirmed the wild hopes that her ambitious soul entertained.

"It was indeed a crushing, incredible rumour that has been whispered from lip to lip, that such a prize has been appropriated ere it has been seen and admired. That must be one of rumour's falsehoods; is it not, fair Lady Amice?" he said, in a lower tone.

"It is utterly unsanctioned and unwelcome to me," said Amice, haughtily. "I would never forgive such false—"

But ere she could finish her sentence her eyes encountered the frowning countenance of Lord Easton, who had entered the apartment through the small private door that led to the less public apartments of the duchess.

(To be continued.)

A MERITED REWARD.—It will be remembered that some weeks ago a mail train going up a steep incline on the Cornwall Railway met a misadventure coming down on the same line of rails, the driver of the latter having lost control. The driver of the passenger train, Samuel Westlake, immediately reversed his engine at full speed, and succeeded in running back the two engines, however, approaching each other within a score of yards. The press having taken up the matter, a subscription was raised and a sum of 100 guineas was collected, which was recently publicly presented by the Mayor of Plymouth at the Guildhall, in the presence of a large number of persons. Westlake received 50 guineas, the remainder being divided between the five other

deserving officials of the two trains. Two men who jumped off on perceiving danger received nothing. Laudatory speeches were made by the mayor and others, and very suitable acknowledgments by the men. The mayor also presented to each man a handsome Bible and a purse of money, subscribed by the congregation of the Baptist Chapel, Plymouth, in thankful recognition of the deliverance of their senior pastor, the Rev. John Aldis, who was a passenger in the train.

WARNED BY THE PLANETS.

CHAPTER LXII.

THE Earl of Strathespy found himself in utter darkness, bruised and stunned by his fall and badly hurt about his head. He never knew how long he had lain unconscious after that sudden descent; life and reason returned to him in a dim, uncertain way, and he lay in the mould and gloom of the dank dungeon, weak, helpless, gasping for breath.

All this life seemed to be blotted out at the moment, only one hideous remembrance remaining—his son's face—that mocking, murderous face that glared on him as he sank down in the black abyss, and the dreadful words rang still in his ears:

"Who will be Earl of Strathespy now, my lord?"

Slowly and painfully his faculties began to reassert themselves. He remembered all, the events of the past day, the letter he had received, and understood that he had been lured into a trap, and by the boy he had reared and loved as his own son. He intended to murder him that the earldom might be his.

The truth stabbed the earl's heart like a cruel knife, for despite all the boy's natural depravity and meanness he had loved him. For his sake he had wronged his wife and made her an outcast from his home and heart—for this boy's sake; and now, after all, he had turned serpent-like and stung him to death.

Only one human passion clung to him as the endless hours and days dragged by, and that was his pride—it outlived every other emotion, his pride in the spotless name he bore. He grieved to leave it in hands so unworthy his old name and honoured title, in hands that would surely drag it down to infamy and disgrace.

If he might have lived to right that one wrong, to let the world know that the man who bore his name was not his son, then death would have been welcome. But his doom was sealed, and he would be succeeded by a murderer.

"Ah, Marguerite, my poor, wronged darling," he murmured, "thou art fearfully avenged. If I had listened to thee, been guided by thy holy maternal instinct, I should never have come to this."

Day and night were indistinguishable in that black, lathsome vault, but a cycle seemed to have gone by, and the unhappy earl, faint and weak and half-delirious with the pangs of starvation, began to fancy that life had ended with him and he had entered upon some endless existence of future punishment, when all at once, as he lay panting and prostrate, a door creaked upon its hinges, and a ray of blinding light flashed upon his aching eyes.

He struggled to a sitting posture and turned towards it, but it was some time before his eyes, so long accustomed to darkness, could distinguish one object from another. When the partial blindness wore off he saw the figure of a woman, with a lamp held aloft in her hand.

She was robed in garments that glittered in the dim light; a velvet robe all starred with jewels, laces shading her white bosom and rounded arms, and diamonds everywhere, on her dainty slippers, in her bosom, and crowning her black braids in a royal tiara.

The earl gazed upon this glittering vision, believing for the moment that she was merely the hallucination of a dream; but as she advanced toward him he cried out, in utter amazement:

"Can it be Lady Drummond?"

She advanced and faced him, her dazzling beauty seeming to irradiate his gloomy prison. Never before, perhaps, had her singular charms appeared to such advantage. Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes outshone her jewels, her bearing was that of a born queen.

"Yes," she replied, advancing and looking down upon the dying peer with wicked exultation, "it is Lady Drummond!"

A thrill of hope shot through the earl's heart.

"You have come to free me from this horrible pit of death?" he said.

Lady Drummond laughed, a clear, silvery, scornful laugh, that filled the black vaults with ringing echoes.

"To free you?" she repeated. "Why, no, my lord earl, it is to my hand that you owe your imprisonment! You did not even dream of such a possibility, did you? 'Tis true, nevertheless. It is to me that you owe this imprisonment, and the death that is already creeping upon you."

Lord Strathespy struggled to gain his feet, his thin face growing white with dismay. His beautiful visitor laughed again, as if the sight of his suffering and amazement afforded her supreme satisfaction.

"Don't rise, my lord," she continued, "don't, I beg. I have a great deal to say to you, and I perceive you are too weak to stand. Pray make yourself comfortable and hear me. For a score of years and over I have been working for this hour; suffer me to enjoy it now that it has come!—the hour of my sweet revenge, my triumph!"

"For Heaven's sake, Lady Drummond, what can you mean?" cried Lord Strathespy.

"Have patience, and you shall hear! Do you remember that morning, over a score of years ago, that morning, up at old Cavendish Manor, when you gave me back my pearl ring, my woman's love-gift, and told me that we must forget our youthful folly—when you left me, after you had spoken words of love to me, and went down to Aukland Oaks and married the one woman in all the world that I hated, my cousin, Lady Marguerite, the blue-eyed Pearl of Kent? Of course your lordship remembers it all! Well, that hour, when we parted, I swore a bitter oath that I would have my revenge; and all my life long I have been working for it, and now it has come!"

"Great Heavens, Lady Drummond!" ejaculated the poor man, overwhelmed with horror.

"It surprises you, Earl of Strathespy?" pursued his tormentor, "but it is true, nevertheless. Every act and thought of my life since that hour has tended to one purpose. No one can hate so intensely, Lord Strathespy, as a woman who has once loved. And I loved you once. But you cast me off, and my love was changed into the bitter gall of hate!"

"I have wrought your ruin from beginning to end—you have not had a sorrow, a disappointment, for which you are not indebted to me. It was through my agency that your babe, your hour-old heir, was stolen! It was also my work that substituted another in its place; for, Lord Strathespy, the boy you received and reared as your own was no child of yours, as you might have known had you possessed one atom of common sense or parental instinct."

"He is a convict's son, Earl of Strathespy; his grandmother is the old creature who inhabits this place. Think of that, my proud earl, the boy who bears your name, who is now, to all intents and purposes, Earl of Strathespy Castle, is a convict's son. A fine end truly for the time-honoured race, the haughty, blue-blooded Strathespy!"

The earl groaned aloud, and put up his hands entreatingly, but the beautiful woman, in her velvet and diamonds, only laughed at his agony.

"Your own child I intended should be put to death," she went on, with calm serenity, "but by some strange mischance it was left on the Tyrol heights, and reared by a shepherd. Your countess was wiser than you, my lord—she was right—the child was yours."

"But you, my wise and far-sighted peer, you, acting on my suggestion—don't forget that, I want you to see how faithfully I have kept my oath—you grew jealous of Colonel Gilbert Vernon, and fancied the boy was his. Your wife was true to you, and you made her an outcast—murdered her—worse than that—shut her up in a madhouse to die a lingering death—your true and tender wife, because her mother instinct forced her to claim her own child."

"Lady Drummond, in the name of mercy, I entreat you to leave me!" cried the earl, gaining his feet, by an effort, and recoiling from her.

But she followed him step by step, her eyes gleaming like living fire.

"Not until I have done, my lord; I have not waited twenty years for this hour for nothing. It was my work through my planning that you were haunted and tormented by that weird prophecy, 'Born to be hung'—a prophecy destined to come true, for your heir, my lord, the last Earl of Strathespy, will stand guilty of the murder of his own father! Ha, ha, ha! What a triumph mine is! You did not think me such a clever woman, did you, my lord?"

"I did not think you devoid of common human pity," replied the earl.

"Nor was I," she retorted; "there was an hour when I relented, and was willing to forego all I had plotted and laboured for. You remember that hour well! You were free, and so was I. You might have redeemed your error, wiped out my wrong. Earl of Strathespy, this hour, you might have been a free man, a happy man, with the most brilliant woman in England for your countess. I made you the offer, I gave you the chance, and you refused me! Look at me now! I loved you! I, Cecilia Drummond, whom all men worship, and you dared to scorn my love!"

"And you have your reward! You will die in this place, a slow and lingering death. Your son—the convict's son—will reign in your stead, and in all human probability, I, to complete the measure of my revenge, shall cause him to be arrested, and

he will be hung, for the murder of his father. The Midnight Prophecy will be fulfilled—the name of Strathespy will become a by-word, a thing of shame. I am done! My revenge is sweet! Earl of Strathespy, farewell!"

She turned, with a mocking bow, and was sweeping from him, in her dazzling beauty, but he staggered forward, and caught her velvet robe.

"Stop," he cried, hoarsely, "one word. My son, the boy found in the Tyrol, what became of him?"

"Ah! I have almost forgotten," she replied, with a smile. "I am glad you reminded me—twill be one drop more. I caused him to be murdered—I tore him from the arms of your countess, and had him murdered. You need have no hope that he lives, or will by any chance succeed you—he is dead—your only heir is the convict's son—Adieu!"

The earl reeled back, half-fainting from want of food, and watched her with a kind of fascinated horror, as she sped through the great, grated door, closing and locking it after her. The last shimmering ray of light departed, and the black gloom of the grave again surrounded him. He slid down to a kneeling posture, and rested his aching brow against the dank, mouldy wall.

"Oh, Heaven," he prayed, from the depths of his agony, "if ever Thou didst help and pity a poor lost sinner, help and pity me."

CHAPTER LXIII.

By degrees Maggie Renfrow became accustomed to the great, ghostly old State chamber in which she was so securely imprisoned.

At first, the grim portraits, and the great, gloomy bed, with its velvet hangings, and the flitting, shapeless shadows, thrilled her with a nameless fear. She shuddered and started at every sound, every rattle of the oaken casements, every creak of the dismal fire without.

But time conquers all things, and time conquered Maggie's fears. She grew accustomed to the great, grand apartment, and even began to like it; and in the space of three nights she would cuddle up in the great, gloomy bed, and sleep as peacefully as if her pretty brown head rested on its pillow in her father's own cottage. There was a tall bookcase in an alcove in the chamber, curtained with moth-eaten velvet, and filled with musty volumes; and Maggie dug them out, soiling her pretty hands, and raising clouds of dust, but she found something to read—stately, old-fashioned novels, with which she beguiled the endless hours.

At first Lord Angus had visited her each day, sometimes twice a day; and at each visit the same stormy scene was enacted, he renewing his proposals, and Maggie refusing them with scorn. But the young peer was growing dangerously impatient, and swore in round terms that he would not longer be trifled with. At the end of three days he made his final visit.

"I'm going to London to-night," he said, addressing Maggie, "to be gone a week. Gwynneth will take care of you. You needn't flash up so, you won't escape—I shall see to that! You'll never go from this place till you go as my wife—you're the only woman I care to have, and have you I will. But I'm tired of this—I've humoured you long enough. When I come back, in a week's time, I'll have it my own way—do you hear? I shall bring you an outfit, and jewels, and all that; and if you won't become my wife willingly, I'll make you do it by foul means. You understand? I'd rather not, but if you force me to it I will, and it will be the worse for you. Come now, let's part friends! Kiss me good-bye!"

He advanced towards her and laid his hand on her arm, but Maggie hurled it off, retreating to the other side of the room, with a look in her young eyes that the young man, with all his insolence and brutality, dared not face. He turned from her sullenly, and left the room.

"Confound her!" he muttered, as he looked the door. "Her eyes stabbed me like a knife; but I'll have it my own way when I return—yes, I will! I won't be browbeaten by a woman."

Maggie was left to herself. The hours dragged by wearily, and her impatience grew to be a torture. She threw aside her book, and did the same thing she had done a dozen times before—went round and examined her room, every window, crack, or crevice, hoping to find some point where she might effect an escape.

The look in the young peer's eye had startled her. She must escape before he returned from London. She must! Her poor, fond old father would die of a broken heart if she delayed much longer. The thought made her frantic, and she ran from one point to another in an ecstasy of impatience; shaking the doors, the windows, tearing at the great oaken tiles, till her delicate hands were all bruised.

The apartment was ceiled with oaken panels beneath the faded tapestry, and in her frantic search the poor girl fancied that one of them sounded hollow. A wild thrill shot through her heart. She had read of secret passages in old buildings like

this; what if she should find one? The very hope made her half delirious. She tore away the dusty tapestry, and beat against the panel with all her might; but it seemed as solid as the eternal hills. She was turning away in unutterable despair and disappointment, when a little crevice in the oak panel, by the merest chance, attracted her notice, a little crevice, with something black like the point of a screw protruding from it. She brushed away the dust, and tried to remove the screwlike point. It would not draw out, but it yielded beneath her touch with a sharp snap, and the oaken panel slid to one side, revealing a small closet and a narrow staircase winding downward.

Maggie stood breathless for an instant, and then, realizing the whole blessed truth, she uttered a suppressed cry of delight, and was about to push her investigations farther, when the sound of footsteps in the corridor without fell on her affrighted ear. She hastily replaced the panel, drew down the old tapestry, and hurried to the opposite side of the room as the door opened, and the old woman known as Mother Gwynneth entered, bearing a tray of provisions in her hand.

She deposited it on a table, glancing curiously about her, for the noise had not wholly escaped her attention, and the flushed, excited look on Maggie's face roused her suspicion.

"Well," she began, dropping a courtesy to Maggie, her eyes still wandering keenly about the room. "How d'ye fare to-day, my bonnie ladie?" "I'm well, as usual," responded Maggie, struggling terribly to calm her voice and face.

The old woman eyed her steadily for some moments, and continued:

"Well, sit ye doon then an' eat yer bite o' supper, while I gie ye a bit o' gude advice—sit ye doon, my purty bairn."

Maggie obeyed, even so far as to take up one of the oat-cakes and begin to nibble it.

"The young laird be gone to Lonnion," continued the old creature, "and he bid me make red dy for the wedding-day agin he coom back. He's a braw young laird, my lass, as went on, a curious tenderness thrilling her voice and lighting her dim eyes, "the handsomest young mon in England, and the richest and noblest now—Laird Strathspey, the earl, he be dead now, did ye know?"

"The Earl of Strathspey dead?" cried Maggie.

"Yes, he be dead fur sure and certain," chuckled the old woman, "and the braw young laird be earl now, and ye'll be a countess, my lassie—fine luck—fine luck, bless yer purty face!"

"But now for the good advice—dinna ye hold out agin the young earl any longer, he be gettin' dangerous—I see it in his eyes—no tellin' what he might do. He'll bring ye braw dresses an' jewels fit for the queen herself! to wear when he cooms, and dinna ye say nae to him, my lass. But go to the kirk like a gude child, and he'll make ye a countess, and the fi. eat ladie in England."

Maggie uttered no word in answer, but sat munching at her oat-cake, with her heart throbbing wildly in her bosom.

The old woman arose and left the room.

"Now eat yer supper like a gude bairn," she called back from the door, "and keep yer purty cheeks round and rosy till yer sweetheart cooms back."

She closed the door, locked it, and drew the heavy bolts, and then Maggie heard her descending the stairs. The stormy twilight was falling gloomily without, the rain driving against the casements in great, smoking sheets, the winds wailing, the surf sobbing in the distance.

Maggie went to the barred window, and looked out. Would the darkness never come? She dare not make her attempt too early, and her impatience amounted to agony.

Slowly, slowly the hours wore away! The storm increased with the darkness, till the old ruins seemed to rock beneath its fury. The winds howled amid the grim turrets, and the sea thundered on the sands below.

But Maggie felt no terror. She stood all alone in the ghostly gloom, intent upon her purpose, strengthened and impelled, as she said in after years, by some power stronger and more divine than her mere woman's will.

As near as she could determine, about midnight she lit her candle and began her researches. She drew aside the tapestry, and, approaching the panel, pressed her finger upon the little point in the crevice. It yielded as before, and the panel slid slowly aside, revealing the secret passage way.

Without an instant's hesitation the brave girl passed through, carefully shading her candle from the draught. The spiral staircase led down into some subterranean abode of gloom. She strained her eyes, and held her light aloft, but she could discover nothing; the little winding staircase seemed to vanish in an abyss of rayless blackness.

A dreary prospect enough, but Maggie did not falter. Shading her light, she began the awful descent, treading the stairs which for centuries had not been touched by human feet. The damp and

poisonous atmosphere almost stifled her, and now and then a bat, or some noisome thing, went hurtling across her sight, threatening to extinguish her glimmering light; but she pushed on, some divine inspiration giving strength to her tottering feet, and courage to her woman's heart.

Down and down and down, till her limbs ached, and her head grew dizzy, and the thick vapours, growing colder and more offensive as she descended almost took away her breath. Where would this mysterious staircase lead her? Down into the very pit of nether darkness? Once she paused irresolute, the dank, green walls shutting her in, her face looking awfully white and unearthly in the flickering light. But that irresistible something impelled her on. There could be nothing more dreadful in store for her than the fate that awaited her if she returned.

She started on again, holding her uncertain taper with a steady hand, and at last the staircase terminated abruptly, and her feet touched a solid floor—a stone floor, reeking with mould and moisture beneath her feet, and above and around an underground room, wholly devoid of windows, an awful, tomb-like place.

The thunder of the sea, and the wild roar of the storm, filled it with hoarse reverberations, and made the great, grim towers seem to rook and shudder above her head.

The poor little girl, her brown eyes dilated, stood motionless for a full minute, holding her light aloft, awed and terror-stricken by her dismal surroundings. There was not the faintest hope of escape, but if the worst came, she might retreat to this place and die! That was all.

She stood there, feeling a vague pity for herself, as if she were some other person, half irresolute whether to go back or remain where she was; when all at once, plainly distinguishable from the hoarse thunder of the sea, or the rattle of the storm, she heard a piteous groan, the cry of a human being in bitter agony.

At first her very blood curdled, and the perspiration broke out upon her forehead in great, cold drops. But, as we have asserted, Maggie was a brave girl. In the space of a minute she rallied. What was it? The voice of some poor soul imprisoned like herself?

She followed the sound, and found that it proceeded from another vault, separated from the one in which she stood by a thick stone wall.

There was no door, no semblance of an outlet, nothing but the solid masonry, not the least hope of effecting an entrance. She turned away, but the piteous human cry again arrested her, melting her tender heart within her. What should she do? Was there no mode of entering this dismal tomb, save by the spiral staircase? She turned and looked at it, a little thread of stairs running upward into the darkness, and a great iron trap-door on one side, which no doubt in days gone by had been used to guard the aperture. Nothing else! And that plaintive moan breaking ever and anon upon the awful silence. She forgot her own peril, in pity for this unknown sufferer, and uttered a brief prayer for help from above.

Then she fell to work again, running her deft little fingers over the rough stones, peering into every crack and corner, and at the last moment, just as she was giving up in utter despair, under the green mould, in one corner, she came upon a crevice, with a little iron point embedded in it.

She uttered a low cry of delight. It was precisely similar to the one in the room above, and must be a secret spring. She put down her candle and pressed upon the little point with all the force she could command. But it was rusty, and would not yield. She tried it again and again, at last it gave way, and the heavy stone slid back so suddenly that Maggie fell forward after it. A strong current of air rushed in and extinguished her light, and she was left in total darkness.

Lord Strathspey had given up all hope, and resigned himself to his fate. A terrible fate it was, to die all alone in that dismal dungeon the lingering death of starvation.

By a mere chance, or perhaps it was the work of a Divine Providence, in Perth, when he determined to obey the request contained in the mysterious letter, and go to the old "border watch-tower," the earl obtained a few sandwiches and a case of manillas, which he deposited in his pocket, little dreaming what a blessing they would prove to him. As the days of his imprisonment wore on, and the pangs of starvation assailed him, he had devoured his sandwiches and smoked his manillas, thereby prolonging his life.

But on this stormy night the last crumb was gone, and the poor man lay on the mouldy flagstones in the last extremities of thirst and hunger. His tortures were indescribable. If death would only come and end them!

He had resigned all hope, all interest in life, and lay there in the black gloom, with a wild, dreamy

fancy that death would soon come, and his wife's face smile upon him in beauty and tender forgiveness from the celestial shore.

He felt a kind of pleasure in his sufferings, enduring them as a penance for the wrongs she had suffered, and believing that when the starless night ended, and the eternal morning broke, all his sins and errors would be at an end.

But the night was so long, so long! The chill gloom clung to him like a garment, the mad sea thundered against the walls of his prison, and the wild storm shook the hoary battlements above him. Would the end never come! In his agony and impatience he moaned like a weak woman.

But what crash was that? Had the storm loosened the foundations of his cell? And a cry, a woman's plaintive cry! He struggled up and strained his eyes in the darkness. Some subtle instinct warned him that some human creature was near.

"Who's there?" he demanded, his voice startling him with its hollow, ghostly sound.

"It is I, Maggie Renfrew! Can I help you? Who are you?"

The sweetest, softest, tenderest voice that mortal ear ever heard. An angel surely sent from Heaven to help him. The earl looked to see his prison doors burst open, and the glory of Heaven illumine the darkness around him. But the sweet woman's voice spoke again:

"Who's there? Won't you speak and tell me what I can do?"

The earl spoke, still in doubt whether an angel or a woman addressed him.

"I am Angus, Earl of Strathspey, imprisoned here by those who seek my life," he said. "Who is it that offers me help?"

A suppressed cry of surprise answered him, and then in the dead, dark silence he could hear the light fall of a woman's foot. The sweet voice spoke again, close to where he lay:

"Lord Strathspey, are you here too? I am Maggie Renfrew, Doctor Renfrew's daughter. Don't you know me?"

"Why, yes, I know you," the earl replied, brought back to his sober senses by the familiar name. "In Heaven's name, my child, why are you here?"

Maggie hesitated one instant in her reluctance to give pain, and then spoke the truth.

"I am imprisoned here by the young Lord Angus, your son."

The earl started to his feet, but reeled back again in his weakness.

"Imprisoned here, in this dark tomb?" he cried.

"My poor, little girl, for what purpose?"

"Because I refuse to become his wife." For an instant both were silent, and then the girl asked: "And you, my lord, why are you here? They told me you were dead."

(To be continued.)

FIGHTING WITH FATE.

CHAPTER LIII.

WE will now resume our narrative of events occurring at Lady Thaxter's town residence upon that Saturday night when Darrel Moor and Grimrod, with their murderous resolves, went to Huntingdonshire.

Somewhere about half-past nine o'clock, when Moor and Grimrod were speeding upon their way northward in an express train, Lady Thaxter's footman flung open the drawing-room door, and announced Lord Waldemar.

The stern old lord came in looking grand and stately, but there was a warm smile under his frost-white moustache, and an unwonted softness in his fiery black eyes, as his glances rested on the beautiful Hungarian countess. He took her hand in his, with a warm pressure. She received him with hardly concealed agitation, her thoughts upon the ungrateful task she had undertaken—that of enlightening his lordship in regard to the character of his villainous nephew.

Lord Waldemar had his usual bunch of cool, odorous wood violets for Lady Rothmere, which he presented with a graceful compliment. He sat down, inaugurating a pleasant conversation, but presently Mrs. Early stole out, and soon after Lady Thaxter also withdrew, being called out by her housekeeper.

For the last week it had happened that soon after his arrival each evening at Lady Thaxter's house, Lord Waldemar had invariably been left alone with the beautiful countess. The devotion of the grand old baron to the lovely foreign lady, it would seem, had not been unmarked by Lady Thaxter as well as others.

"You are not at the House this evening, my lord," said Lady Rothmere, inhaling the delicious perfume of her flowers. "I fear your country will not have cause to bless your personal friends. Lord Taxbury said last evening that your party expected a great triumph from you to-night. Ah, how sweet these

violets are! They remind me of my young girlhood. They must have grown in the heart of some sunny old wood."

"They did. I have a man down in Kent who sends them up to me daily," said Lord Waldemar, simply, as if he had taken no unusual trouble to gratify a lady's taste. "I always think of you in connection with wood violets, countess, although you resemble more some tall and graceful lily."

"Thank you. A very pretty compliment, my lord; but I am not fond of compliments," said the Hungarian countess.

"If one were to speak to Lady Rothmere only words of sincerest truth, those words would be all of praise," said the old lord, gallantly. "Ah, countess, what is this charm with which you have bound me? When I speak in the House I raise my eyes to the gallery in the hope of seeing one face there—yours—which is an inspiration to me. Some magnet draws me to your side evening after evening. A house lighted by your presence is in perpetual sunshine. You diffuse a restfulness and peace which are like balm and sweetness to a passion-tossed soul."

"I am afraid I shall not diffuse such restfulness to-night," said the countess, with a grave, sorrowful smile. "My lord, let us leave the regions of compliment and talk of business. The word sounds oddly to you from my lips, does it not? I have something to say to you, and I fear you will not be inclined to pardon the interference in your family affairs of one who was so lately a stranger to you. Will you give me leave to speak freely?"

The baron concealed the surprise he undoubtedly felt, and exclaimed, with great earnestness:

"Say what you will, my dear countess. I am only too happy that my family affairs should have awakened your interest."

"You are very kind," said the Hungarian countess, in some embarrassment. "My lord, you remember and have frequently spoken of Miss Gint, the beautiful young lady who was a guest of Lady Thaxter last month. You seemed to take a keen interest in this young girl."

"I did, and do, madam. She bears a striking resemblance to my dead son. I could not tell you yesterday, countess, that the marks upon her arm to which you so carelessly alluded were precisely similar to certain marks upon the arm of Miss Floyd, and which, in Miss Floyd's case, determined her identity with my son's child. I could almost believe this young Honor Gint to be my own grand-daughter if it were not for the evidence in Hilda's favour. Yet what evidence is there so strong as Honor's resemblance to my son? Were you about to speak to me about this girl's parentage?" cried his lordship, agitatedly. "Can you tell me if Honor Gint is the actual daughter of Captain Gint?"

"Sir Hugh Tregaron told me that she is Captain Gint's adopted daughter, my lord, and that the captain found her in Valetta sixteen years ago."

"Not Captain Gint's daughter! Then her resemblance to Wallace Floyd means something. She is of Hilda's age. Can I have been deceived? Can Hilda be an impostor, and can this beautiful girl with her radiant eyes be my grandchild? It is too good to believe. I will probe the mystery to the very bottom; and if it should prove true, and this girl prove to be my lineal descendant, I shall for ever bless you, dear Lady Rothmere, for putting me upon the track of this mystery. My very soul repudiates Hilda, and turns to this sweet young Honor Gint."

"The question of the young lady's identity must be decided when she is found; but the first thing to be done is to find her. You know, my lord, that she strangely disappeared last month?"

"Yes, I know."

"We have had detectives searching for her everywhere; but they cannot find the young girl. Her enemies are cunning. She has been hidden away in some concealment scarcely less secret than the grave. She is in the power of an enemy as remorseless as death. We are at a standstill in our search, and she may be crying out to us from behind her prison bars. My lord, our only hope now is in you. You can perhaps throw light on the question of her whereabouts."

"I!" exclaimed the baron, in sheer amazement.

"Yes, my lord," said the countess, raising her shining sapphire eyes and pale, eager face to him. "This young girl's story has been kept from you through fear of wounding you. Sir Hugh Tregaron and Lady Thaxter shrink from telling you even now, and it is left to me, so recently a stranger to you, to break to you their suspicions. You suffered once, they tell me, through the disobedience, if it might be called so, of your son—pardon me, my dear lord, and hear me. We believe that you have fixed your affections on your nephew. Can you hear to be told that he is an unscrupulous villain?"

"That is no news to me," said his lordship; "but how came you to know it, countess?"

"My lord, Sir Hugh Tregaron, Lady Thaxter, and I also believe your nephew Darrel Moor to be the remorseless enemy of Honor, and the cause of her disappearance."

The baron seemed overwhelmed with astonishment. "I presume Darrel is capable of stealing the girl away," he said; "but he does not know her."

"You mistake, my lord. Shall I go on? Shall I be the true friend to break this news to you? Darrel Moor did know Honor Gint. She stood in his way. She was his wife!"

Lord Waldemar seemed stupefied.

"You look incredulous," said the countess, in her low, sweet, eager voice. "I said she was his wife, No, she was not that. He has been in Lancashire all the winter; he paid suit to her. Mrs. Gint bade Honor seek another home, and Darrel Moor begged the girl to marry him. She was grateful to him, liked him, and accepted him. They were married in a chapel at Bolton, in February last; but their marriage was an empty form, an idle ceremony. They separated at the very altar. He so revealed his hideous moral nature in the very vestry of the chapel that she fled from him as from a leper. She hid herself from him. As for him he repented his marriage before he signed the marriage register. I sent a man to Bolton yesterday to procure a copy of the registry, to be used in intimidating Mr. Moor, and it is found that the leaf on which the marriage is registered is missing. There is no proof in existence either at Bolton or at Somerset House of that marriage. The only proof of it is contained in a simple certificate in Honor's hands, if it has not been stolen from her. Moor's man Bing went to Honor's lodgings in Southport, and nearly succeeded in stealing this certificate, and very probably it has since been taken from her by force."

"All this seems incredible!" cried the old lord, in a cruel agitation. "I have believed Darrel a villain, but this—is this monstrous! Why did he not avow his marriage to me? Nothing would delight me more than to receive this lovely girl into my family."

"She is poor, and Darrel Moor seeks to marry Miss Floyd," said Lady Rothmere, bitterly. "But, countess, even the loss of all these proofs does not invalidate the marriage. The witnesses remain, and I will see that justice shall be done this young girl when she is found."

"My lord, the absence of the proofs does not necessarily invalidate the marriage, but the existence of his first wife at the time of his second marriage does."

"Good Heaven! Do you mean that Darrel has committed bigamy?"

"Yes, my lord. He married Honor Gint in February last, but his wife, whom he married ten years ago, died only the night before last. She lies unburied at a retreat for the insane in Huntingdonshire."

"His wife, countess, are you sure?"

"I know whereof I speak, my lord," said the countess, firmly. "His lawful wife, Carmine Roff—formerly the actress known as La Belle Carmine—died in a stable within forty-eight hours last past."

"I questioned Darrel about Miss Roff the other day, my lady, and he said—pardon me—that he was never married to her."

Lady Rothmere produced the two copies of the registry of Moor's marriage to Miss Roff, and silently gave them into Lord Waldemar's hands.

He read them.

"You see, baron," said his ladyship, when he had finished, "that Darrel Moor married Carmine Roff, at St. Helen's Church, Brighton, in the year 1859. He carried his wife abroad, but tiring of her—you know how fickle he is—and conceiving that he had injured his prospects by his union with her, he determined never to avow it, and suffered people to think her not his wife. He wronged that proud-souled woman most cruelly. He drove her mad, and now she lies last dead."

"What a miserable villain he is! Why, he has proposed to me for the hand of Hilda Floyd."

"He desires to marry her for money and position."

"I left him at my house this evening, the scoundrel!" cried Lord Waldemar. "He seemed the impersonation of carelessness and innocence. That he should marry Miss Gint while he had a wife living—that he should desire to marry Hilda, and so add another crime to the hideous category—bait as he is, Lady Rothmere, I could hardly believe all this from any other informant. Why have I not been told before?"

"Sir Hugh Tregaron shrunk from telling you without being able to produce proofs in support of his assertions, but he is nevertheless convinced that Moor has hidden away Miss Gint."

"Yes, Darrel must be guilty."

"Do you know any place, my lord, to which Moor

might have taken Miss Gint? Does he own any secluded property where Honor might be safely hidden?"

"No—why, yes. I gave him a farm in Huntingdonshire, among the fens, with a 'haunted house' attached, in which no one can be found to live on account of its evil reputation, and yet which is in excellent repair. It is known as the Cypressess, and would be the very spot in which to imprison any one. But it's a long journey from Bolton, at which place Miss Gint was last seen. He could not have removed her by a railway train. How could he have transferred her from Bolton to the Cypressess?"

"He is a man of infinite resources for evil. The Cypressess! Honor is there! I feel it—I know it. She is shut up there in the wild and lonely district of the fens!"

The countess spoke the words in the greatest excitement. Her lovely face flashed. Her eyes glowed.

The door opened, and the hall porter came in with two letters upon a tray. One had come by post, and the other had just been left at the house by a private messenger. Both were addressed to the countess.

Lady Rothmere opened the stamped letter first. It had been written in the afternoon of the same day, and was signed with the name of the detective officer her ladyship had taken into her employ on the previous day.

It contained these words:

"Mr. Darrel Moor was married at St. Jude's Church, London, W., this day at eleven o'clock, to Miss Hilda Floyd, grand-daughter of Lord Waldemar. Wedding secret. Only witnesses—Mrs. Watchley and Lord Waldemar's business manager, Mr. Grimrod. The party all gone to Crystal Palace, Sydenham, for the day."

The countess handed the letter to the baron. He read it with a lowering brow and eyes that emitted sparks of anger. He found himself utterly unable to speak.

Lady Rothmere perused the second missive, that which had been left at the house by a special messenger.

It was from the detective now on guard over Moor's movements—the substitute of the first writer. The note ran as follows, in very indifferent orthography:

"The bird has taken to his wings. Followed him to station. Took up-express. Tickets for Somerset Station, Huntingdonshire. Lord Waldemar's business manager went by same train to same place. The two men seemed to avoid each other at station. Got into separate carriages. Looks as if something was up. Did not follow, as had no orders."

Lady Rothmere gave this message into Lord Waldemar's hands.

He read it, and they looked at each other a full minute in silence.

"Somersham is the nearest station to the Cypressess," said the baron, at last. "It's ten or twelve miles from the farm. He's gone to her. You are right. Honor is at the Cypressess."

"And she does not know that she is not his wife?"

"It seems," said Lord Waldemar, in a laboured voice, glancing at the letters, "that Grimrod and Mrs. Watchley assisted at this marriage to-day of Hilda and Darrel Moor. Grimrod is treacherous to me, you see. It is hard to believe it. And he has gone with Moor to the Cypressess to-night. Why have they gone if Darrel's marriage to Hilda to-day is legal?"

The countess could not answer.

A cold sweat started in big beads on the baron's forehead.

His face became ghastly pale.

"Countess," he whispered, "I suspect—how can I say it? To-night at dinner, when we were alone, I told Darrel I suspected that Honor Gint is my grandchild, and that Hilda is an impostor. I told him I should investigate the facts of Honor's parentage. Can you not see? He has gone—to—to rid himself of her claims—to remove her for ever."

The countess sprang up with a wild shriek.

"Oh, my lord!" she cried, "we must go to her—to Honor. We must save her. We will take a special train. Here comes Sir Hugh Tregaron. We will all go."

"Not you, countess?" cried the baron, in astonishment.

"Yes, I too! My attendant shall go with me. I must go, my lord. Send a messenger to order a special train. I can be ready in ten minutes. Do not try to dissuade me. I must go."

There was that in the wild, imploring face that stifled the expostulations upon the baron's lips.

Sir Hugh Tregaron came in, and Lord Waldemar explained to him the state of affairs, while the Hungarian countess flitted away to acquaint her hostess with her plans and to don her travelling garb.

The baron's communication plunged Sir Hugh into the wildest alarm.

"I'll go down and order the special train," said the young Cornish baronet. "I fear Lady Rothmere is preparing unnecessary fatigue for herself, but she has become greatly attached to Honor, and she has some purpose regarding Darrel Moor which I do not understand, so that her presence with us is not unjustified. Shall you go home before starting on your journey, my lord?"

"No, I wait only to escort Lady Rothmere to the station."

Sir Hugh hurried away upon his errand.

Within fifteen minutes Lady Rothmere, in a quiet travelling costume, attended by her maid and accompanied by Lady Thaxter and Mrs. Early, returned to the drawing-room.

The countess had resisted all the dissuasions of her friends, only repeating her assertion that she must go. A cab was at the door—sent by Tregaron. Lady Rothmere, with hasty adieu to her hostess and friends, entered the cab, her maid followed, Lord Waldemar took his place, and they drove swiftly down the street, proceeding to the railway station.

CHAPTER LIV.

On arriving at Somersham the party proceeded to the best hotel.

Sir Hugh ordered a sitting-room and bedrooms for the countess and her maid, and a horse and chaise for Lord Waldemar and himself.

The old baron escorted her ladyship up to her sitting-room, resisting her entreaties to be allowed to accompany him and Sir Hugh to the Cypresses.

This was that night in which Honor had escaped from the Cypresses and found refuge in the cottage of Mrs. Williams.

Lord Waldemar and Sir Hugh, accompanied by a Somersham constable, drove out upon the lonely road winding through the fens, and some time after midnight drove up to the rear door of the old "haunted house" at the Cypresses.

The constable beat a fierce tattoo upon the door.

Miss Bing hurried from the kitchen, where she had been crouching before the fire ever since her discovery of Honor's escape, and unfastened the door, crying out:

"Have you found her? Oh—"

The latter exclamation was elicited by the discovery that it was not Darrel Moor who had aroused her.

She essayed to close the door, but Sir Hugh Tregaron leaped into the hall followed by his friends.

"Lead us to Miss Gint!" cried the young Cornish baronet, his voice ringing, his eyes flashing.

The woman uttered a cry of dismay.

Sir Hugh repeated his demand yet more peremptorily.

"Miss Gint is not here," declared the terrified spinster.

"Where is she?"

"She has escaped—gone to London—hours ago!" gasped Miss Bing.

Sir Hugh dashed past the woman into the kitchen, seizing a lighted candle, and commenced a rapid search of the lonely old house.

The constable compelled Miss Bing to attend them.

They found the room in which Honor had so long been confined.

Her sewing materials, the dying fire on the hearth, a worn blue ribbon, all testified whose room this had been.

The shutters were nailed tightly now, and the window was closed securely, but the rope Honor had manufactured from the sheets and blankets lay across the denuded bed, and corroborated Miss Bing's story of Honor's recent escape.

"What is your name, woman?" demanded the constable.

"Judith Bing," faltered the spinster.

"Bing—Bing?" said Lord Waldemar. "Are you a relative of Mr. Moor's valet?"

"Yes—yes, sir, I'm Bing's sister."

"Humph!" said the old baron, in a stern voice, looking at her with his fiery gaze, which greatly increased her terror. "Are you in the employ of Darrel Moor?"

The woman looked about her, as if searching for some loop-hole of escape. The constable gripped her arm more closely, and roughly commanded her to speak, telling her of his official character.

Evidently giving up Moor's cause for lost and desiring to save herself from the ruin threatening him, Miss Bing resolved to save herself at all cost and gasped out:

"I'll turn queen's evidence, I will. I'll tell the truth. I know it's transportation, or penal servitude, but I thought she was his wife, and a man can treat his wife as he likes. And so—and so—Oh, I'm not so blame! I'm a poor, lone woman as was led away by my betters. Mr. Moor, he is a gentleman as ought to know what from what, and

he said as how the girl was his wife, which I see the marriage certificate, and I'm not to blame, and I won't tell without I'm promised to be let go."

"You will not be punished if you tell us the truth," said Lord Waldemar. "But you must speak promptly. Has Darrel Moor been here this evening?"

"Ye-s, sir."

"Did he take the young lady away with him?"

"No, sir; she was gone before he came. When he drove up that rope was dangling out of window. He tore off like a madman, and I haven't seen him since. He went Somersham way."

"We did not meet him," said Sir Hugh.

"He may have turned off a side road, or turned into the fens," said the constable.

"How did Miss Gint come here from Bolton?" inquired the baron.

"In a gipsy waggon, along of my brother and his girl, both disguised as gipsies," said Miss Bing, tearfully. "But my brother was led away by his master, sir. Bing is not a bad man—no, that he isn't. It's all along of Mr. Moor, if there's any harm done, which I don't see," she added, waxing bolder. "Mr. Moor brought his wife to his own house, which was a very natural thing for a gentleman to do, although he's never been to see her but once, and then treated her respectful as if she were the queen."

The gentlemen interrogated Miss Bing still further, and were satisfied that she had told him the truth.

"The young lady has gone to London, gentlemen," said the constable, in a tone of conviction. "She got away safe enough, and is with her friends at this moment."

Having searched the entire house from attic to cellar, they descended to the kitchen, and took their leave of Miss Bing, who believed them about to return to town immediately, and was overjoyed at her escape from the meshes of the law.

But out of doors, upon the gloomy lawn, in the shade of the cypress trees, the three men halted, and the constable having reiterated his belief that Honor was now safe in London, Sir Hugh said, quietly:

"We will telegraph from Somersham. It is quite evident that the woman has told us the truth so far as she knows it. It is evident that Miss Gint has escaped, has eluded her enemies, and that they are now searching for her. We may find her at Somersham. She must have gone to the nearest station. I do not think her enemies have captured her. She will be on her guard. We must go back."

They re-entered the chaise and drove back to the town.

They did not meet Moor or Grimrod on the way, the two villains being then engaged in searching the fens for their escaped victim.

On arriving at the town they drove directly to the station and made inquiries; but no young lady answering to Honor's description had been seen there that evening.

They went to every public house, but failed of course to gain any tidings of the young fugitive. Last of all they went back to the Hungarian countess, who met them at the door of her sitting-room, white and eager, with wild and questioning eyes.

She read their failure in their looks, and silently turned away.

"Don't despair, dear Lady Rothmere," said the old lord. "We shall find her yet. She has escaped from her prison, and Heaven will protect her and keep her from the fangs of those pursuing hounds."

"Escaped! escaped!"

"Yes, she's somewhere about. She may have heard us rattling by to-night, and taken us for her enemies, and so concealed herself in the wayside bushes or in the fens. We shall find her to-morrow."

"To-day," said the countess. "It is almost dawn."

"I did not think of it before," said Sir Hugh, "but Miss Bing said that Honor arrived at the Cypresses at night, and how then could she have known the way to Somersham? She is likely to have gone in an opposite direction, or to have turned into some side road leading nowhere in particular. We shall find her safe and well."

Lord Waldemar was greatly fatigued, and retired to his room.

Sir Hugh ordered a fresh horse to be put to the chaise, and went away with the constable, searching lonely and bye-roads, and going miles upon the road beyond the Cypresses.

He saw nothing of the two villains who were also searching the same ground with assiduity.

About the middle of the afternoon he called at the Cypresses again with the constable, but Moor and Grimrod had not been at the house since the visit of the former on the previous night.

The pursuers, hungry, tired and dispirited, re-

turned to Somersham to find that Honor had not yet appeared there.

Lady Rothmere emerged from her room, attended by her maid, and Sir Hugh gave the history of his day's researches.

"Did you inquire at any wayside house at which Honor might possibly have taken refuge, Sir Hugh?" asked her ladyship.

The young baronet started, and his worn face lighted with a sudden glow.

"We inquired at one or two, but not at all," he said. "The road between Somersham and the Cypresses is sparsely settled. I will go out again and inquire at every house. Honor is likely to have become tired and stopped at some farm-house."

"If you go again to the Cypresses to-day, I must go too," said the countess. "This inaction and suspense are terrible—unbearable. I long for the fresh air, and to feel that I am doing something too."

Lord Waldemar looked in pitying tenderness at the lovely blue eyes filled with a brooding terror and anguish, and said, gently:

"We will go again to the Cypresses this evening. If Darrel should find Honor he would take her there. We will inquire at every house on the way, and you Lady Rothmere can accompany us."

Dinner was served at six o'clock.

Soon after dusk Sir Hugh Tregaron and the constable set out for the Cypresses, and half an hour later Lord Waldemar and the Hungarian countess entered the pony chaise and drove out of the town, also on their way to the Cypresses.

Sir Hugh and his aid made inquiries at every house without success, and but one more, a mere cottage, remained to visit. This was the cottage of Mrs. Williams, some five miles distant from the Cypresses.

As they approached this they heard frantic screams, as of one in anguish.

Driving up, they beheld Mrs. Williams seated on her door-step in an utter abandonment of grief.

Sir Hugh leaped from the chaise and approached her, addressing her respectfully.

"Can you inform me, madam," he asked, "if a young lady has passed this way since early last evening? Is it possible that she can have taken refuge with you?"

Mrs. Williams looked up, hushing her cries.

"Who are you?" she demanded.

"My name is Sir Hugh Tregaron," replied the baronet. "I am looking for a young lady, Miss Honor Gint, who escaped last night from her enemies—"

The woman interrupted him with a cry of joy.

"Oh, sir," she cried, springing up, "if you are her friend, save her, save her! They mean to kill her. They dragged her out of my house, before my very eyes, not twenty minutes ago. My poor little Hilda! Oh, they will kill her! They have taken her that way—towards the Cypresses!"

Sir Hugh ran back to the chaise, and the woman hurried with him, demanding to be taken too. She clambered in over the wheel without help; the baronet leaped in, and the constable whipped up the horse to a deal gallop.

"To the Cypresses!" cried Sir Hugh, in a low, concentrated voice, freighted with the wildest excitement and suspense. "To the Cypresses! Oh, Heaven! shall we arrive in time to save her?"

(To be continued.)

RULED BY WOMEN.—There is a remarkable little State, among the Holland possessions, which, in its constitution and the original customs of its inhabitants, surpasses the boldest dreams of emancipation ladies. Upon the island of Java, between the cities of Batavia and Samarang, lies the little kingdom of Bantam. Although tributary to Holland it is an independent state, politically without importance, yet happy, rich, and since time immemorial governed and defended by women. The sovereign is indeed a man but all the rest of the government belongs to the fair sex. The king is entirely dependent upon his state council composed of three women. The highest authorities, all state officers, court functionaries, military commanders, and soldiers are without exception of the female sex. The men are agriculturists and merchants. The body guard of the king is formed of the female elite. These amazons ride in the masculine style, wearing sharp steel points instead of spurs. They carry a pointed lance, which they swing very gracefully, and also a musket, which is discharged at full gallop. The throne is inherited by the eldest son, and in case the king dies without issue (a hundred elected amazons assemble, in order to choose a successor among their own sons. The chosen one is then proclaimed lawful king. The capital city of this little state lies in one of the most picturesque parts of the island, in a fruitful plain, and is defended by two well-kept fortresses.



[LOW LIFE ABOVE STAIRS.]

EDITH'S TEST.

"You look sad this morning, Edith," said her friend Isabella Barrows as she entered the room where Edith sat gazing thoughtfully into the glowing grate. "For one who made so many conquests last evening, and was the acknowledged belle of the ball, it looks a little singular."

"Why should I?" asked Edith, smiling. "I ought to feel sad to think that I can bestow my hand on but one of my admirers, and must doom the rest to disappointment."

"Oh, nonsense!" said her friend, gaily. "One needn't trouble oneself about such an affair as that. Men's hearts are never touched so deeply but that they easily recover. By the way, what did you think of Reginald Fitz Eustace? I noticed that he devoted himself almost exclusively to you."

"Yes, and his attentions were very disagreeable to me. He is a silly fop, and anywhere but at a party he would be unendurable."

"But he was introduced by Mrs. Armstrong."

"That makes no difference. Respectable connexions cannot make a man out of a puppy. His character depends entirely on himself."

"You are in a strange humour this morning, Edith."

"Perhaps I am. The truth is, I am getting tired of so much dress and show, and so many senseless compliments. I wish society might be reorganized on a better basis. Now, as long as persons have beauty and wealth they are flattered and caressed, while those who do not possess these requisites, but are far superior to them in moral worth, are scarcely noticed by the fashionable world."

"That may be, and I do not deny it; but why should you be disturbed about it? It does not affect you."

"I hope you don't mean to imply that I have wealth and beauty rather than strength of character."

"Well, how you do take one up, Edith! There's

no satisfaction in discussing such a matter with you."

"No, we should never agree. You are content with the adulation bestowed on your wealth and beauty, while I wish to be valued for my worth alone, whether it be little or much."

"I don't think you will find many of our set to sympathize with you. But do you think of attending Mrs. Anderson's reception this evening?"

"Yes, I suppose so. She would feel slighted if I remained away. Of course you will be there."

"Certainly. I wouldn't miss being present for anything. It will be the most *recherche* entertainment of the season. Adieu till we meet there."

"Must you go so soon?"

"Yes; I have two or three other calls to make, and must not stop longer."

Edith sat musing for a few moments after her friend had left the room.

"Yes," said she, at length, "that will do. It is a plan that has been often tried before, but it has always proved a sure test."

At this moment the door was opened, and a woman ushered in by the servant, who then withdrew.

"What is your business with me, my good woman?" asked Edith.

"If you please, ma'am," said she, with a courtesy, "the cook told me ye were wanting a maid, and I come to apply for the situation."

"Can you dress hair nicely?"

"Yes, indeed, ma'am, said she, courtesying again, "and wasn't I maid to my Lady Walsingham? She thought the world of me."

"Do you know anything of dressmaking? Can you fit dresses?"

"I can. It would charm you to see how well they fit."

"Very well," said Edith, absently, "you can come for a week on trial. Mary will show you where to put your bonnet and shawl."

"Thank you, ma'am," said the woman as she turned to leave the room.

"Stay," said Edith, "you forgot to tell me your name."

"It is Katy Maguire, ma'am," said she as, courtesying low, she went out.

That evening Katy performed her first duty as lady's-maid by dressing Edith's hair. This she did very cleverly, arranging it in braids and forming a coil at the back of the head.

"That looks very well," said Edith as she glanced at the mirror before her. "Now you may take from the closet the brown-silk dress and over-skirt you will see there."

"You ain't going to wear that dress, are you, ma'am? To my mind the blue one would be much more becoming."

"I shall wear the brown one," said Edith, decidedly.

After she had dressed herself carefully, but plainly, she stood before the mirror to consider the effect.

"I think this will do very well," said she, rearranging a bow which she had put on in place of the elegant pin which she at first thought of wearing.

"But ain't you going to wear any jewellery, ma'am?" asked Katy, in surprise.

"No, not to-night."

"What a pity, when it would become you so," said Katy, looking as if she thought her mistress must be a strange woman.

At this moment Mary appeared at the door.

"The carriage has just come round, miss," said she.

"Ah! James is punctual to-night. Katy," said she, turning to her maid, "you may put these things in order. You needn't remain up for me, as I may not come home till late."

"Yes, ma'am," said Katy, courtesying as her mistress left the room.

Katy listened till she heard the carriage roll away from the house. She then closed the chamber-door, and proceeded to take an inventory of the dresses remaining in the closet—with what purpose remains to be seen.

"The blue one's the purtiest of the lot," said she as she took it down and laid it on the bed. "If Miss Edith won't wear it, it's my opinion that Katy Maguire ought to. It won't be long before it'll be out of fashion; and it might as well be doing some good to somebody first. Besides, dresses needs airing sometimes."

She proceeded to put on the dress, which, as her mistress was several inches taller than herself, trailed considerably.

She then took out several sets of jewellery, and fastened them in conspicuous places on the waist of the dress.

She put all the bracelets she could find upon her wrists, and placed around her neck a gold chain, and also a string of carnelian beads. Taking a richly embroidered handkerchief from a box near by, she took it in her hands and placed herself before the mirror.

"There, Katy Maguire," said she, courtesying to the image reflected there; "you look like a lady born and bred. If your mistress should see you now, she wouldn't need to ask if you was an experienced dressing-maid. There ain't many that shows such fine taste in dressing, or has enough jewellery to set off the dress with. What a beautiful trail it has, sure!" said she as she glanced complacently down at the dress which lay in rich folds upon the floor behind her. "I must go downstairs now. It is almost time for James to be home from driving Miss Edith to the party. He's a nice lad, and I'll be much surprised if he ain't took with my charms."

Edith arrived at the house of Mrs. Anderson somewhat earlier than she intended. There were, however, many who had preceded her.

Her arrival caused quite a buzzing among those present. But Edith, without apparently noticing it, went quietly and spoke with Mrs. Anderson, who immediately introduced her to her friend, Mrs. Lawrence.

The latter was an elderly person, dressed plainly in a sober, gray dress. But she was intelligent and very interesting.

Edith hardly realized that she had remained so long in conversation with her until she beheld a young man coming toward her whose approach brought a vivid flush to her cheek.

"Good-evening, Miss Livingston," he said. "I think mother has monopolized you long enough, so with her and your permission I will take you away to promenade with me."

Edith nodded, smiling, and Mrs. Lawrence said:

"Miss Livingston has been very kind to remain with me so long, when there are many younger persons who no doubt feel that they have a better claim upon her time."

"I feel that I am the obliged party," said Edith. "The time has passed so pleasantly that I have not noted its rapid flight."

"It must be then," said Edward, "that I was providentially sent to interrupt the *tête-à-tête*, lest you two persons should monopolize too large a share of the enjoyment of the evening."

They passed slowly along through the rooms, chatting pleasantly on topics familiar to both.

Edith could not fail to observe that significant glances were cast toward her, and she occasionally heard remarks which showed that her plan was working according to her expectations.

Her admirers of the preceding evening all seemed to have deserted her.

Reginald Fitz Eustace passed with a distant bow, and paid assiduous court to a new comer, who was reported to be heiress to a large estate.

Her companion observed these slights, and strove to prevent Edith from noticing them.

"Let us go into the conservatory," said he. "There are some rare plants in bloom which are well worth seeing."

As they entered the atmosphere seemed redolent with tuberose and jasmine, and the eye was delighted with the brilliancy of the blossoms.

They passed around, giving frequent expression to their admiration.

As they paused before an orange-tree covered with blossoms Edward said:

"Miss Livingston, you may consider me presumptuous when I tell you that I have long loved you. Until to-night I thought the knowledge would remain concealed within my own breast, but circumstances have happened which embolden me to ask for this fair hand. Shall not the answer be a favourable one?" he asked, as, taking her hand, he looked eagerly into her face.

"But," said she, casting down her eyes, "have you not heard the report, Mr. Lawrence, that I had lost my property? You surely would not take a dowdier bride?"

"That is my reason for seeking you, I have heard of your loss, which I consider good fortune for me, since qualities which I prize all remain. I have property sufficient for a comfortable support. As for wealth there are many who possess that but who would make the most disagreeable of partners, since they have nothing else to render them attractive."

"I am afraid you may repent your choice."

"You need have no fears on that score. When I heard the report I thought it very doubtful if I should see you here to-night. I feel that I cannot sufficiently admire the courage with which you have braved Mrs. Grundy's criticisms by appearing here, as you have, in a plain dress, to correspond with your altered circumstances."

"It is pleasant to know that there is one who appreciates personal worth as of higher value than dress and outward adornings. I know of none among my acquaintances to whom I could so entirely trust my happiness as yourself."

"Ah! I have found you at last, Edith," said a voice near them. "I wasn't sure that you were present, as I haven't seen you before this evening."

"Oh! it is you, Uncle William. Permit me to introduce my friend, Mr. Lawrence, Mr. Barstow."

"I am happy to make the acquaintance of the young gentleman," said her uncle, cordially grasping Edward's hand.

"I came to say," added he, "that I should return home in a few moments, and to ask you if you would not like to go at the same time, rather than wait for your carriage?"

"Do you think it necessary to go so early?" interposed Edward. "But perhaps it might be more pleasant for you," he added.

"Yes," said Edith, after a moment's hesitation. "On the whole, I think I will return with you, uncle. But," said she, turning to Edward with a flushed face, "I shall be glad to see you at the house whenever it will be agreeable to you."

"I will call to-morrow evening, then, if you are not engaged."

"I shall be happy to see you at that time," said Edith.

"A very pleasant young man," remarked Mr. Barstow as they turned to leave the house.

When Katy Maguire descended the stairs she met the chambermaid in the hall.

Mary started back and gazed at her for a moment without speaking.

"Well, Katy," said she, at length, "whoever'd a thought of this being you? What are you rigged up in Miss Edith's finery for?"

"I am Miss Maguire now," said Katy, loftily, "and I expect you'll treat me like a lady, as I am. I shall give a reception this evening in the drawing-room, and when you go downstairs you can invite

Miss Flaherty, Miss Merton, and Mister Dunn to be present," and she passed along the hall, swinging her dress.

In a few moments the servants, attracted by Mary's report of Katy's doings, came upstairs. They found her seated on a sofa with the skirt of her dress spread out so as to make as great a display as possible. They went forward and made low bows to her. She acknowledged the salutations by a slight inclination of her head.

"This must be a very select party," said James, "when Miss Maguire didn't invite more persons to be present."

"Sure," said Ann, "we don't know how many invitations she has sent out. Fashionable people don't come very early. We'll have more by-and-bye."

"Miss Edith may come home," said Mary, who was a little jealous of Katy, and feared she might receive more attention than herself.

"How can she come till I go for her?" said James. "Didn't she order the carriage to be there at twelve? It isn't eleven yet."

"That's true, James," said Ann.

"Miss Maguire," said James, "won't you favour us with a little music?"

"If you will enquire me to the pianer, I will play, providing you will all sing."

"Av course we will," said Ann.

"I ain't a going to sing, for one," said Mary.

"Your voice won't be missed, Miss Fluchley," retorted Katy, sarcastically.

"Allow me to lead you to the pianer, Miss Maguire," said James, with an attempt at grace.

Katy took his arm and went to the piano, where she seated herself.

"What can you sing, ladies?"

"You choose the song for us," said James.

"Well then it's a medley I'll play, an' then ye can sing what ye please."

Katy commenced drumming on the piano, and her companions sang, each one a different piece.

The door-bell rang, but the noise prevented all but Mary from hearing it. She went to the door.

"What does all this noise mean?" asked Edith as the door opened. "Who is in the drawing-room?"

"It's none of my doin's," said Mary. "You had better go yourself and see."

Edith without another word threw open the door.

Katy was sitting at the piano with her companions around her. Their backs were turned toward the door, but from the mirror opposite their faces were reflected.

When Edith saw Katy sitting there so complacently, dressed in so grotesque a manner, and beheld the open mouths of the singers, her sense of the ludicrousness of the scene overcame her, and she started back for an instant.

But quickly recovering herself she entered the room, saying:

"What does all this mean?"

The music ceased; and James, Ann, and Mary turned round with startled faces, and beheld their mistress.

"It's all Katy's doings, miss," said Mary, a little triumphantly.

Katy darted a withering look at the speaker, and, turning towards Edith, said:

"We were only indulging in a little innocent amusement, ma'am. I hope you're not offended."

"But who gave you leave to deck yourself in this manner?"

"Sure I was only airing the dress, ma'am, as it had hung so long in the closet."

"Well, I don't approve of any such airs. Go to your rooms, all of you, and—turning to Katy—"do you take off these garments at once. I will decide to-morrow what to do about this matter."

The servants left the room, looking crestfallen enough—all but Katy, who swept out of the room with a lofty air, determined to keep up her character to the last.

Edith brought out her portfolio and wrote a letter to her mother as follows:

"MY DEAR MOTHER,—I daresay you will be surprised when I say to you that I am betrothed, but I am sure you will be pleased when I tell you that the gentleman is the son of your old friend Mrs. Lawrence. Feeling that I was sought by many of my admirers from mercenary motives alone, I asked Uncle William to circulate the report that I had lost my property. This he did, and the effect was that most of my admirers passed me with a cool bow. But Edward, who had never paid me much attention, came forward and made himself very agreeable. The end of it was that he proposed and I accepted him. He is to come here to-morrow evening to call. I hope to see you at home soon. My love to Aunt Mary and yourself,

Mrs. Livingston was much pleased at her daughter's choice.

Edith and Edward will soon marry, and two persons at least will be made happy by the result of "Edith's Test."

C. F. F.

LORD DANE'S ERROR.

CHAPTER LIV.

VOLNEY looked at Sybil's rich attire; sombre though it was in hue, the elegance of everything was apparent, even to him.

"She is rich and lives luxuriously on the money I gave the baron for her," he said to himself. "She perhaps fancies I can procure her more."

"You have searched in vain, Sybil; I will not forgive you. I hoped never to see your siren face again. You should never have come seeking me, then you need never have known but that I was dead, and then you might have married Lord Talbot Dane and had all you once married me for."

Sybil regarded him in the wildest perplexity. Was he indeed insane? or did he really, by some strange chance, not yet know the truth?

"You are Lord Dane, Volney. Surely you know that?"

He looked back at her angrily.

"I wish you would leave me, Sybil. I loved you once, but that is over now. I am not so mad as you would doubtless have liked to make me."

She began to think he was mad.

"It is true what I tell you," she said, slowly.

"Look out of the window, please, at that carriage. Surely you remember the Dane coat-of-arms. I came here in that very carriage, Volney. As your wife only I have a right to use it. I am Countess of Dane as your wife. My husband, oh, for Heaven's sake believe me! and our child—I have a son, Volney, your son and mine. Will you not believe me?"

A dark purple flush shot swiftly across the white face of Volney, Earl of Dane. What frightful mockery of the truth was this? He put his hand dizzily to his forehead, then he turned slowly and looked from the window at the waiting carriage with its attendant coachman and footman. Those seemed Lord Dane's liveries, those his servants; the coachman had a familiar look. It was the same man who had driven him and Sybil to Dane House on the morning after their marriage.

He looked back at Sybil, who had come toward him and stood with her white hands extended.

"My darling," she whispered, "I love you better than all the world. My life has been only agony since I lost you; forgive me and love me—come back to me and forget all the past."

Volney passed his hand again over his forehead and grew deadly pale. He had suffered so much.

"Repeat to me what you said before," he said, in a mechanical voice.

Sybil was crying. Her lips were white with pain, but she replied:

"I know now. I learned within six months, Volney, that it was not you who killed my unhappy father. Baron Chandos was your mother's brother. You, instead of Talbot Dane, are the son and heir of the last Lord Dane. Don't you remember, dear, the pictures at Leuseleigh and how much you looked like them all? And Perdita is your sister. It has all come out, and the papers have been found to prove it; Talbot Dane has turned barrister, and never comes near us. I have not spoken twice with him in three years. You are Earl of Dane beyond any one's question."

Volney still stared at her, deadly white. It was all so strange. He must have gone mad indeed, he thought, to imagine that his wife stood there in her matchless loveliness, and told him tales like this. He staggered a little and sank into a seat, lifting his hand sternly when his wife approached him.

Sybil covered her face and sobbed passionately.

"He hates me; he will never, never believe me. Oh, Heaven, what shall I do to touch his heart, to reach his soul?"

Volney did not look at her. With his face sunk on his clasped hands he sought to shut out the sight of that siren beauty which had betrayed him once and seemed now only a delusion and snare.

"Won't you speak to me, Volney?" said Sybil, coming forward again and touching his head with her clasped hands; "do speak to me, Volney. Come with me now to Perdita, and you won't blame me so hardly. I know I was cruel, but I was so miserable myself, and I loved you so; and I thought it was wrong if you had a hand in papa's—Oh, Volney, come."

Volney lifted his head again at last, and looked at her out of his sunken, preternaturally blue eyes.

"I could forgive you anything but that horrible mad-house, Sybil," he said, in a hollow voice. "Heavens! what I suffered there! Some of its sights and sounds will never be out of my ears again, and I've never felt quite safe from that ruffian since—not even

here. I've worn disguises and kept my doors locked. I've starved days sooner than go out for food, for fear he should see me. Look."

He showed her his bare arms, both of them thin and blue and scarred at the wrists.

Sybil shuddered.

"Yes," she said; "Cheeny told us when he was dying where to look for you. The madhouse was burned the week before Baron Chandos got there. Then we tracked Monsieur Lampiere, the French doctor, and when we found him he said you were dead. I distrusted his false and wicked face. I could not believe him. I have sought you ever since. Volney, do not let it be in vain. Come with me. Your son is three years old. He can already say papa, and he knows you by your picture. Dearest husband, let the dead past go."

Volney drew a long, shuddering breath. It was impossible to believe in such rapture—his son, his wife, the Earl of Dane! Three years of misanthropy, starvation and fear of the madman's doom had gone far to really unbinge the senses of this high-strung, suffering gentleman. He could not believe what he had heard. It was simply impossible.

Suddenly he grew calm.

"Listen to me," she said; "put your hand in mine and swear that you will not leave this room while I am gone, and I will go and bring your son to you. You will believe me, you will forgive me when you hear him speak your name and cling about your neck."

Sybil caught her breath with a sob in spite of her self-control.

"Oh, Volney, Volney!" she cried, wildly, and caught him about the neck before he could hinder her, "you must, you shall forgive me."

There was a moment's interval. Sybil for one wild instant fancied that her husband returned her embrace. Then her arms were unclasped from his neck gently but firmly, and he led her toward the door.

"I give you my word if you can take that," he said, sadly and solemnly. "I will stay here two hours and wait for—my son, that son you say I have. If this tale which you have just told me is all a fabrication, only a trick to get me safe out of your way again, don't go on with it, I warn you. I shall murder somebody before I go back to what I escaped from before I came here. If you are a longer time than I have named in returning here I shall know what to conclude—that it is a trick, and your heart has failed you in carrying it out. You shall never see or hear of me again."

Sybil's lips were white, her heart seemed to turn cold at his words. What if anything should happen to hinder her return within the time he had set? She looked up at him, she was about to entreat him to go with her, but she saw that it would be in vain.

"I will come," she said, as solemnly as he. "I will bring your son to you in less than two hours."

They clasped hands, this strange husband and wife. Sybil's eyes lingered wildly for a moment on his, then she ran downstairs, and, without glancing at the little Frenchwoman who had let her in, flung herself into the waiting carriage with the simple order:

"Drive for your life."

"It's some old love, and he will hear nothing. He is hard, is monsieur," said Madame Frangals, as the young countess flung herself out of the house.

"Something uncommon is up!" said coachman and footman as the elegant landau dashed away.

"Shall I call at the Luxembourg Gardens?" asked the coachman, respectfully.

"No—home!" answered my lady, with curt decision. "Ten pounds if you get there within half an hour!"

The coachman stared, but whipped his horses.

Perhaps it was the terrible haste he made, perhaps all would have chanced the same. It was a *fête* day, and a main street which they had to traverse was thronged with people and vehicles. The carriage of the Countess of Dane became somehow entangled and was overturned. The countess herself was taken up from among the debris and carried senseless into a friendly mansion near.

She knew nothing until some time the next day, and then she only opened her eyes to ask what o'clock it was, and, hearing what had happened, fainted again. That was the last Sybil, Countess of Dane, knew for three weeks. By that time the house, No. 10, in the Rue Genevieve, was deserted, and she knew that her husband was once more lost to her, worse than though she had never found him.

By degrees, as dawned upon the unhappy wife that her husband attributed his incarceration in the French madhouse to her. It was still a mystery to her how he came there, but since the dead villain Cheeny had alone known where he was she concluded that he had for some wicked purpose of his own contrived it.

Sybil's distress and agony of mind were if possible greater than if she had not seen her husband at all.

To have found him and lost him again seemed too great a misfortune to be borne.

Perdita was lost between perplexity and grief. Why should Volney disappear in that mysterious manner if he had really been found? She was almost inclined at first to doubt Sybil having seen him at all. But she surrendered these doubts after hearing the particulars of that harrowing interview from Sybil. She said what she could to try and comfort her.

"He will come to you now, depend upon it," she told her. "He will learn upon the merest inquiry that you have told him the truth, and will come to seek you of himself. Let us go back to England and wait there for him to come. He would never know where to look for us here."

(To be continued.)

FACETIE.

WHAT NO DAIRYMAN CAN ADULTERATE.—The milk of human kindness.—*Punch*.

WHEN men break their hearts it is just the same as when a lobster breaks one of its claws—another sprouts out immediately and grows in its place.

WHY GET SOBER?—A writer says: "It is not the drinking, but getting sober, that is so terrible in a drunkard's life!" "Why get sober at all, then?" says Smiggles.

MONEY AND CHARACTER.—When you have lost money in the streets every one is ready to help you to look for it; but when you have lost your character every one leaves you to recover it as you can.

A SCOTCH peasant girl, on arriving for the first time at the turnpike gate nearest Glasgow, knocked and inquired, "Is this Glasgow?" and being answered in the affirmative, asked, "Is Peggy in?"

THE FIRST RAIL.

Ted: "Do you have many hops in the country, Polly?"

Polly (his simple Kentish Cousin): "Why, of course, Ted, you know pa has sixty acres."—*Fun*.

NEATLY TURNED.

Gallant Paddy: "Shure, they're illigant creases, daisin'. But choose yer own buncches. Some iv 'em's like yourself—better looking than others!"—*Punch's Almanack*, 1873.

EXTENSIVE KINGDOM.—A gentleman having a servant with a very thick skull used often to call him the king of idiots. "I wish," said the fellow one day, "you could make your words good, I should then be the greatest monarch in the world."

"Get out of my way—what are you good for?" said a cross old man to a little bright-eyed arabin, who happened to stand in the way. The little fellow, as he stepped on one side, replied, very gently: "They make men out of such things as we are."

LOWER TONE.

Tim: "What does Cris-mas mean? Why it means 'corn'—an' 'wine'—an' 'hoil'—an' 'roast'—beefs an' plum puddings—for the happier classes—for hus lower-downs—it means these year leaves—an'—prickles!"—*Fun*.

IT'S AN ILL WIND, ETC.

"Oh, papa! what do you think? Four out of our twelve boxes are missing."

"Hurrah! By George! that's the best piece of news I've had for a long time."—*Punch's Almanack*, 1873.

HEAVY REPORTING.—"At the close of a violent thunderstorm," writes a country reporter, "a suit of clothes was found at the foot of an oak tree in the suburbs from which the recent occupant seemed to have been percussively eliminated by a flash of lightning."

THE LANGUAGE OF BELLS.—"Turn again, Whittington," said the bells of Bow. Bells say all sorts of things, mostly, to English ears, in English. But the Christmas chimes also talk French. In that language they ask for turkey continually, saying "Dindon!"—*Punch*.

ABRIVALS AND DEPARTURES.

Inebriated Spouse: "Well, m'dear! Meh Cris'm's! Cris'm's is come."

Stern Better-half: "Supposing Christmas is come, it's no reason why you should be gone—and so very far gone, too!"—*Fun*.

HE JETS AT SCARS.

Saladman: "Now then, ain't yer goin' to bid for the best 'oss in the fair? Scratched for the last Derby in consens of being too sure to win?"

Bystander: "Scratched, eh? Judging from 'is knees I should ha' said cut, not scratched."—*Fun*.

A MISFIT.

Little Tomkins (excitedly): "I say, my dear fellow, how do they fit, eh? Will they do?"

The Dear Fellow: "Well I should say you—ah—don't look well in men's clothes!"—*Judy Almanack*, 1873.

A PEN.—"John, where have you put my steel pen?" asked an editor. "Haven't seen it," said

John. "You know better, sir," said the editor, producing the desired implement from a drawer. "You put it here yourself." "That's your scissors, sir." "Well, that's my steel pen, isn't it? (Go to—the post-office.)"

THE LITTLE DENNER.

Scene—A Restaurant; Chace-time.

Alarming Swell (out for the day): "Waitaw-ah! Have you any salary?"

Afable Waster: "Salary, sir? No, sir; only the kindness of you gent's to depend on, sir."

MORE SELFISHNESS.

Playful Babe: "I say, Clara, pull off your boots and stockings, there's a good fellow, and come and help me to launch my boat—uncle won't."

(Would you believe it? she would!)—*Judy Almanack*, 1873.

BOBBOWED PLUMES.

Picture the rapture of little Fussiboy, who had borrowed his aunt's brougham to take him to the concert at the Albert Hall, when, a shower of rain coming on, the old girl's coachman pulled up, took a box from under the seat, and proceeded to change his best hat for an old one!—*Fun*.

HIGH LIFE IN THE COUNTRY.

Doctor: "I am pleased to say, Mrs. Fitzbrowne, that I shall be able to vaccinate your baby from a very healthy child of your neighbour, Mrs. Jones."

Mrs. Fitzbrowne: "Oh, dear, doctor! I could not permit that. We do not care to be mixed up with the Joneses in any way."—*Punch's Almanack*, 1873.

MINISTERING TO A MIND DISEASED.

Doctor: "Not interested in anything—read all the new novels;—let me recommend something new, The Philosophy of the Unconscious. The author says that our race must be destroyed before we have a chance of permanent happiness—I should say there was something stimulating in that!"

SENTIMENT.

Young Lady (to the loving one who has timidly made a request): "Why, Gussie, you great, big stupid, what on earth do you want with a lock of my hair? I've got a whole chignon at home you can take away and wear next to your heart if it pleases you."

NATURAL HISTORY.

Lady Teacher: "Tell me, now, where these animals are to be found—the lion, the tiger, the monkey and the cat."

Small Boy (getting on rapidly): "Please, miss, lions and tigers is found in forests, and monkeys is found in Zoological Gardens, and cats is found on back-yard walls."

BOTH ROTHERED.

School Examiner: "Name the kings of England who died violent deaths."

Boy: "Please, sir, did a king who died in a fit die a violent death?"

School Examiner: "I am not allowed to help you in answering questions. You must judge for yourself!"—*Punch*.

MAKING HAY.—A gentleman who was staying at a seaside hotel during the summer expressed his dissatisfaction to his landlady of the heavy charges in his bill. "Well, you see," she said, "our season is so very short that we are obliged to make hay while the sun shines." "That may all be very true, my good woman," replied the visitor; "but though I know all flesh is grass I decidedly object to being made hay of."

THE PHILOSOPHER AND THE FOWLS.—It is said that a lady who lived near Mr. Carlyle kept Coochin China fowls, and the crowing was such a nuisance that the philosopher sent in to complain of it. The lady appealed to was indignant. "Why," she said, "the fowls only crow four times a day, and how can Mr. Carlyle be seriously annoyed at that?" "The lady forgets," was the characteristic rejoinder, "the pain I suffer in waiting for these four crows."

PLACETS.

Letter on the breakfast-table from Messrs. Blackstone, Bacon, and Coke, solicitors, announcing a legacy of 10,000*l.* from a distant relative.

Invitation to dine with the Drysalators' Company. Unexpected arrival of old acquaintances from the colonies, with presents for wife and all the children, and settlement, with compound interest, of a note of hand for 100*l.* dated fifteen years back.

Elders and senior wrangler.

Engagement of youngest and favourite daughter to large landed proprietor. Unnumbered estate—old manor house—good family—high character—capital shooting—county magistrate—sound views (exactly our own) on all the leading questions of the day.

Discovery on an old book-stall of a very rare first edition; bought for a few shillings, worth as many hundred pounds.

Lengthened and eulogistic notices in the leading daily papers of new poem—"Mithridates."

Election at the Solon Club.

The finding in a box of old papers, in a disused

garret, of a MS. diary kept by Shakespeare during his residence in the metropolis.
Christmas hamper.—*Punch*.

THE HOLBORN VALLEY.

Alt.: "The Happy Valley."

Oh! after many roving weeks,
How slow it is to come
To the dwelling-house in Edgware Road,
Our small, our smoky home;
To turn away from mountain heights,
From churches, town-halls, towers,
And journey by the Underground,
And stick to office hours.

Oh! after many roving weeks, etc.

Now I have laid my tourist suit
Away in yonder press,
And with my usual life resume
My usual London dress!

Condemned to toll another year
In this commercial alley,
Whose only view is Ludgate Hill,
And prospect Holborn Valley.

Oh! after many roving weeks, etc.

—*Punch's Pocket-book*, 1873.

AN HEROIC YOUTH.

That was a noble youth who on being urged to take wine at the table of a famous statesman had the moral courage to refuse. He was a poor young man, just beginning the struggle of life. He brought letters to the great statesman, who kindly invited him home to dinner.

"Not take a glass of wine?" said the great statesman, in wonderment and surprise.

"Not one simple glass of wine?" echoed the statesman's beautiful and fascinating wife as she arose, glass in hand, and, with a grace that would have charmed an anchorite, endeavored to press it upon him.

"No," said the heroic youth, resolutely, gently repelling the proffered glass.

What a picture of moral grandeur was that. A poor, friendless youth refusing wine at the table of a wealthy and famous statesman, even though proffered by the fair hands of a beautiful lady.

"No," said the noble young man, and his voice trembled a little, and his cheek flushed. "I never drink wine, but—(here he straightened himself up and his words grew firmer) if you've got a little good Skye whisky, I don't mind trying a snifter."

LET ME TACKLE HIM.

In a case in which Jefferey and Cockburn, when barristers, were engaged, a question arose as to the sanity of one of the parties concerned.

"Is the defendant, in your opinion, perfectly sane?" asked Jefferey, interrogating one of the witnesses, a plain, stupid-looking countryman.

The witness gazed in bewilderment at the questioner, but gave no answer. Jefferey repeated the inquiry, altering his words to

"Do you think the defendant capable of managing his own affairs?"

Still in vain.

"I ask you," said Jefferey, "do you consider the man perfectly rational?"

No answer yet.

"Let me tackle him," said Cockburn. Then assuming his broadest Scotch tone, and turning to the obtuse witness, he began:

"Hae ye yer mull wi' ye?"

"Ou, ay," said the awkward Clonon, stretching out his snuff-burn.

"Noo, hoo long hae ye kent John Sampson?"

said Cockburn, taking a pinch.

"Ever sen' he was that high," was the ready reply, the witness indicating with his hand the alleged attitude.

"An' d'ye think, noo, atween you an' me," said the barrister, in his most insinuating Scotch manner, "that there's anything intil the cratur?"

"I wudna lippen him wi' a bull calf" ("I would not trust him with the guardianship of a bull calf"), was the instant and brilliant rejoinder.

The end was attained, amid the convulsion of the court.

CHRISTMAS JOTTINGS.

Our Yule Log should either be of wood or some other description of timber, and ought to be well steeped in brandy, nutmeg, and ginger, before it is placed on the fire. The person who brings it into the room must retire backwards, with a graceful smile on his countenance, and new buttons to his waistcoat.

If possible, there should be mixed with the mince-meat a little ambergris, finely chopped and grated, which has been gathered at the turn of the tide in a rush basket, by two friends who are each other's executor, and both of a sanguine temperament.

The cloth in which the plum-pudding is boiled ought to be kept from year to year in the plate-chest or some other place of security, wrapped up in cards, and covered with the holly which has been used in the Christmas decorations. When through old age or accident the cloth becomes incapacitated

for farther service, it must be consumed in a wood fire by the cook, and the ashes carefully collected by the housemaid and cast by the footman into a running stream, where it passes under a foot-bridge on which the butler remains standing until the ceremony is over. The new cloth should be bought with silver money which has never been in circulation. Neglect any of these precautions and you are certain to have the sweeps in the house before the end of the next year.

The mistletoe should be cut with a silver bill-hook (electro-plate will not do), to the sound of horns in the twilight, in the presence of the mayor, or, in his unavoidable absence, the registrar of marriages for the district. The loving cup is to be passed round, but no speeches are to be made, and no one is to be present who has ever been crossed in love.

If the turkey has unfortunately been the result of a transaction with the poultryer it is laid down in the cookery-books that it should be boiled in cream and eaten in good feeling. If, however, it is a gift, you should baste it with butter, and hard your discourse at dinner with praises of the donor.

If you cannot afford a baron of beef be content with a sir-loin; if a boar's head is beyond your purse make yourself happy with a pig's cheek, and in the not improbable event of the absence of woodcock pie, substitute any other Christmas game you please. —*Punch*.

THE WAY OF THE WORLD.

How difficult in life to go

Just in the way we should;

In every act to always show

An intent such that all may know

And we be understood.

Our simplest words, the many say,

Some secret thought needs hide;

Our simplest acts are only play

By which to thrust the real away,

While we our time abide.

Does one endeavour here to show

The good that's in his heart,

Or go the way we're told to go,

Says worldly-wise man "Don't be know

Just how to play his part?"

Does any one attempt to hold

His onward way in life

With eyes undimmed by glint of gold,

But firm in truth, in manhood bold,

And free from needless strife,

For ever some base soul is found

To judge him by its aims,

And to the world its voice to sound

"How false his life, how firmly bound,

Some end his acts constrains."

And so, whatever plan we try,

Or way in life we walk,

Some one is ever standing by

Ready to give our acts the lie,

And all our hopes to baulk.

When will the world begin to learn

An honest man may live,

And knaves and dolts to ever spurn,

But 'tween the good and bad discern,

And each his due to give?

Not till the years have rolled away,

And clear sight is to us given,

And the east is reddening with the ray

Which tells the dawning of that day,

The ushering in of Heaven. S. A. M.

GEMS.

THE most certain way to make a man your enemy is to tell him you esteem him much.

Why is love like a fire? Because it burns brightest when everything around is dark.

Men are generally deserted in adversity. When the sun sets our very shadows refuse to follow us.

NEVER listen to an infamous story handed you by a person who is known to be an enemy to the person he is defaming.

Pride is not the heritage of man; humility should dwell with frailty, and atone for ignorance, error and imperfection.

WHAT men want is not talent but purpose; in other words, not the power to achieve, but the will to labour.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

LOBSTER RISOLLES.—Boil the lobster, take out the meat, mince it fine; pound the sorrel smooth, and grate, for one lobster, the yolks of three hard-boiled eggs. Season with Cayenne pepper, a little nutmeg, and salt. Make a batter of milk, flour, and well-

beaten eggs—two tablespoonfuls of milk and one of flour to each egg. Beat this batter well, and mix the lobster with it gradually, till it is firm enough to roll into balls the size of a large plum. Fry in fresh butter, or the best salad oil, and serve up either warm or cold.

SODA WATER IN BOTTLES.—Dissolve one ounce carbonate of soda in one gallon of water; put it into bottles in the quantity of a tumblerful or half a pint to each; having the cork ready, drop into each bottle half a drachm of tartaric or citric acid in crystals; cork and wire it immediately, and it will be ready for use at any time.

BOTTLED LEMONADE.—Dissolve half a pound of loaf sugar in one quart of water, and boil it over a slow fire; two drachms acetic acid, four ounces tartaric acid; when cold, add two pennyworth of essence of lemon. Put one-sixth of the above into each bottle filled with water, and add thirty grains of carbonate of soda; cork it immediately, and it will be fit for use.

STATISTICS.

A YEAR'S TAXATION.—In the financial year 1871-72 the revenue from excise duties (after deducting drawbacks and repayments) amounted to 23,386,064*l.*, from stamps 9,739,543*l.*, from taxes (land, house, and income tax) 11,689,283*l.*, making the total inland revenue 44,805,890*l.*, but the deduction of the charges of collection, viz., 1,616,224*l.*, reduced the net inland revenue to 43,189,671*l.*. The customs duties (after deducting drawbacks and repayments) amounted to 29,315,923*l.*; the charges of collection, viz., 824,300*l.*, reduce the net customs revenue to 19,391,623*l.*. The Post Office produced 5,908,001*l.*, but the charge for the service, which, regarding this as a revenue department, ranks among the charges of collection, amounted to 4,155,738*l.*, reducing the net profits of the Post Office to 1,752,263*l.*. The totals therefore are: Net produce of taxation 70,929,819*l.*, charges of collection 6,596,262*l.*, net produce 64,333,557*l.*. The net product for the last seven years has been as follows: In the year 1866-67 60,340,219*l.*, in 1867-68 61,012,904*l.*, in 1868-69 63,168,317*l.*, in 1869-70 66,071,636*l.*, in 1870-71 69,399,720*l.*, in 1871-72 64,333,557*l.*

MISCELLANEOUS.

It is estimated that 12,000 drowned rats have been washed into the Seine by the floods. There is something good in things evil after all.

Haddon Hall has not been occupied for 170 years, but the banqueting-hall was splendidly fitted up for the reception of the Royal visitors.

It is stated that in future the leave of captains and lieutenant-colonels of "The Guards" will be limited to sixty-five days. Rather a change from eight to nine months!

The highest accounts are given of the Prince Imperial. He is said to be a lad of very great ability and promise, and the professors at Woolwich expect that he will do great things.

A suggestion has been put forward in America that telegraph wires be extended to all the light-houses on the coast, and that a system of signals be arranged to be exhibited from the light-houses to give notice to passing vessels of approaching storms or changes of wind.

The customary metropolitan market for the sale of fat stock for Christmas consumption has been held. The number of beasts on sale was 7,560, including 1,360 from Scotland, 1,230 from Ireland, 1,000 from Norfolk and Suffolk, 3,070 from the Midland and Home Counties, and 400 from the Western Counties.

The sum paid into the Imperial Exchequer during the last financial year by sportsmen amounted to more than half a million. This sum was made up of the following items:—Dog licences, 279,425*l.*; game licences, 189,824*l.*; gun licences, 62,437*l.* 10*s.*; racehorse duty, 9,321*l.* 1*s.*

VIOLETS IN PARIS.—There never was such a supply of violets as is now to be met with in every street corner of the city. According to the language of flowers the violet signifies modesty, virtue, discreet love; hence why the imperialists doubtless patronize it. High and low in Paris love the flower, only differing in the size of the bouquet they can command. Gallantry, it is estimated, expends over half a million in the city in purchasing violets, for which there are two seasons—the spring, when the weeds yield the supply, and at present, when the hothouses and Nîce come to the rescue. The culture and the supplying the market are in the hands of gardeners and their children, who for a large bundle receive from three to thirty sous, according to the season. The wholesale market is at the Halls Centrales, where flowers are disposed of by private bargain, all other articles being put up to public auction.

CONTENTS.

Page	Page
MAURICE DURANT ... 241	MISCELLANEOUS ... 263
TOIL ... 244	
SCIENCE ... 244	
THE SECRET OF ... 245	
SCHWABENBURG ... 245	
GLIMPSES OF SOCIETY ... 248	
LADY BEACONSFIELD ... 249	
THE FORTUNES OF ... 249	
BRAMBLETHORPE ... 249	
ELGIVA; OR, THE ... 253	
GIPSY'S CURSE ... 253	
WARRIED BY THE FLA- ... 256	
NETS ... 256	
FIGHTING WITH FATE ... 257	
EDITH'S TEST ... 260	
LORD DANE'S ERROR ... 261	
FACTS ... 262	
THE WAY OF THE ... 263	
WORLD ... 263	
NEWS ... 263	
HOUSEHOLD TREASURES ... 263	
STATISTICS ... 263	

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

LONELY NELLIE.—Handwriting very good.
NELLIE.—Handwriting two free and bold for a female, at least according to our taste.
A CONSTANT READER.—The note is still in force. It was originated by the philanthropic Earl of Shaftesbury, then Lord Ashley. That peer at least has always been a friend of the people and of the poor.
O. T. M.—Your bacchanalian effusion flows freely, and the versification is most agreeable. It is, however, scarcely adapted to our columns, and we must therefore decline it with many thanks.
OXFORD.—The Queen and Prince Albert visited Oxford on the University Commemoration Day, June 15, 1841. There is no record whatever concerning the other date to which you allude.
LILY B.—We have given several recipes of late—here is one:—Rectified spirits of wine, 1oz.; water, 8oz.; 4oz. orange flower water, or 1oz. of rosewater; 1 teaspoonful of muriatic acid. Mix. To be used after washing.
J. H.—The following is a near approach to what you require—1oz. of soft soap; 2oz. emery, made into a paste; then rub the article to be cleaned with this on wash-leather, and it will have a brilliant polish.
ONE IN A FIX.—Certainly you appear to be situated in an unpleasant dilemma. From what you say, however, we gather that matters have not progressed far with the other lady; and therefore by preference you would do well to take the lady whom you love.
C. M.—It contains much fine devotional feeling, but rather commonplace in expression. Moreover it claims to be considered in a religious rather than in a secular sense. A very sweet little poem on the like subject was written, we may remark, by Miss Alexander, a sister of the present Bishop of Derry.
S. R. L.—1. No; differently arranged. 2. There are several, but apply to a good music publisher. They are not exceedingly expensive, a rudimentary one being about five or six shillings usually.
A LOVER OF THE DRAMA.—A German authority gives the following statistics of the number of the theatres in Europe:—Italy, 348; France, 337; Germany, 191; Spain, 168; Australia, 152; England, 150; Russia, 44; Belgium, 34; Holland, 23; Switzerland, 20; Portugal, 16; Sweden, 20; Denmark, 10; Greece, 4; Turkey, 4; Roumania, 3; Swabia, 1. In Egypt there are 3 theatres.
ONCE IN A FOG.—1. If you want to paint or to stain glass, write again, and we will at once tell you. 2. The frosted appearance of ground glass may be very nearly imitated by gently dabbing the glass over with a piece of glazier's putty, stuck on the tips of the fingers. When applied with a light and even touch the resemblance is considerable.
MERRY ZINGARA.—The title of a story which recently appeared in one of the magazines. The heroine was not an actress; nor is there any necessary connection between the histrionic profession and poverty. In truth, the members of that profession, whether ladies or gentlemen fare much the same as other people. There seems to be an amusing hallucination inhering in the minds of many persons on this subject.
LADY T.—While the leading lines of etiquette are clearly laid down there are in minor matters many open questions, questions which are to be considered matters of individual taste. Not absolutely rude, but most certainly in questionable taste. It would have been much more ladylike and therefore much more correct to have ceased the music. Still it was a trifle, and we quite believe that no insult was designed.
MAUD MARY.—We don't agree with your friends' judgment on your handwriting. It is angular and therefore feminine. Many ladies now—some of the highest and most cultured in England—have however discarded angularity, as we well know. We think your writing good, but just a trifle too cramped. Let it be a little freer. But all that comes by practice. The use of a steel pen or a quill is precisely a matter of taste. The quill is freer, and therefore better for you.
AN ACTRESS.—Your questions cover wide ground, but we can give you some suggestions that may, we hope, be of some service. 1. The cost depends altogether upon the proficiency and progress of the pupil. Manifestly in the case of slow progress the expense would be much greater than where the conditions were otherwise. Several people prepare for the stage, and you would have to place yourself under an instructor. You would probably also have to begin in a very small way, and advance by degrees. 2. We have no record. 3. Such a marriage is perfectly legal. 4. Such names, we presume, as John, William, Thomas,

Mary, Fanny, Emma, etc., etc.—i.e., the names most commonly met with.

W. T. W.—To stain wood the colour of mahogany (dark). 1. Boil half a pound of madder and two ounces of logwood chips in a gallon of water, and brush well over while hot; when dry, go over the whole with pearlash solution, taking two drachms to the quart. 2. Another method:—Put two ounces of dragon's blood, bruised, into a quart of oil of turpentine; let the bottle stand in a warm place, shake frequently, and when dissolved, steep the work in the mixture. To your other question we must honestly tell you that neither specimen is very good, but of the two we incline to prefer the second one. In these days of night-schools and cheap manuals any person may and ought quickly and readily to attain a good style of penmanship.

OPEN TO CONVICTS.—Much may be said on this as on every matter. We should be loth to express a confident opinion. There are many latent powers in man, but certainly we do hold that any endeavour profanely to pry as it were into the high arcana of the universe can in no case lead to good. But on the *audi alteram partem* principle we will give you either side, in order that you may form your own opinion. 1. For spiritualism. The Spiritualist, a serial publication. 2. Against spiritualism—or rather explaining spiritualistic phenomena by natural causes—there is a curious treatise by J. Zerm, Ph.D., of South Kensington. There is also a report on the entire subject, the result of an investigation established by the rather singular Dialectic Society; also pamphlets by Dr. Crooks, Professor Huxley, etc., etc. These at least will fully suit your purpose. The literature of spiritualism is very extensive. Only the spirits seem never to confer solid material benefit—such as a bank note.

THE DISCOURT.

I am going to be married;
 Don't you envy me, dear girls,
 When you look upon my trousseau,
 Wedding-ring and bridal pearls?
 I am going to be married,
 Though my heart it still is free,
 For I am not as old-fashioned
 As my mother used to be.
 She would wed with father (bless him!)
 A poor farmer all for love—
 Darn his stockings, churn his butter,
 Meek as any cooing dove!
 And she calls those days the brightest
 Of her happy married life.
 What a taste was hers, dear mother,
 To be servant-maid and wife!
 I am going to be married,
 Though my lover is fourscore,
 He has gold and silver plenty;
 Pray what lass would ask for more?
 I must never have a love-time—
 I must never ask a mate,
 But do honour to my "veteran,"
 Whom to tell the truth, I hate.
 But I'm going to be married,
 Though a sacrifice, or die;
 And as swift amends hereafter
 How I'll make his money fly!
 What with shopping and with flirting,
 What with dressing like a queen
 I'll be the gayest little wife
 That ever yet was seen.
 Perhaps I'll be a widow—
 Ere I'm thirty—pray who knows?
 With a mint of ready money
 And an ocean of fine clothes.
 Then I'll marry some young sailor
 Who is handsome, although poor.
 Hark! the marriage bells are ringing,
 And the groom is at the door.
 Long, long years are past and over
 Since this maiden chose her lot,
 Yet the old man still is living,
 Hale and hearty, and—why not?
 While his wife has locks of silver,
 And infirmities a score,
 He can count of years a hundred,
 And has hopes of many more! M. A. K.

TED A. T., twenty-two, 5ft. 5in., good looking, dark brown hair, and in the Navy. Respondent must be about eighteen, good looking, and fond of home.
CICELY, medium height, fair, blue eyes, and a good figure, would like to correspond with a dark gentleman, good tempered, tall, fond of drawing and music.
M. T., twenty-two, short, fair, and would try to make a home happy. Respondent must be dark, and able to keep a wife comfortably.
A WELSH GIRL, tall, brown hair and eyes, wishes to correspond with a young gentleman not under twenty, loving and affectionate.
J. H., twenty-three, tall, dark, and would make a loving and affectionate wife. Respondent must be tall and dark.
JACK SKYBAIL, twenty, 5ft. 4in., a seaman, good tempered, and steady, wishes to correspond with a young lady about twenty, good tempered and fond of home.
HENRY J., tall, fair, twenty, good looking, fond of home. Respondent must be tall, fair, and affectionate; a mechanic preferred.
JOSEPH F., twenty-five, and handsome, would like to become acquainted with a young lady who could keep a home clean, and is fond of children.
SID, twenty-two, tall, and fair, would like to correspond with a young lady of a loving nature, and domesticated.
AUBERT, twenty-four, tall, dark complexion, and in the Army. Respondent must be about eighteen, of an affectionate disposition, and fond of home.
TOM, twenty-three, 5ft. 7in., dark complexion, handsome, and loving. Respondent must be about his own age, amiable, and well educated.
ALEX. T. W., twenty, tall, light hair, handsome, and of an affectionate disposition, wishes to correspond with a

young lady who is pretty, loving, domesticated, and musical.

NEDDY, nineteen, good looking, and in a good position. Respondent must be about eighteen, and must be pretty and domesticated.

G. A. C., a seaman gunner in the Royal Navy, wishes to correspond with a young lady about twenty, medium height, good tempered, and fond of home. Answer, eighteen, medium height, considered pretty, loving, and domesticated. Respondent must be loving, fond of home and children.

JESSIE, twenty, tall, dark, loving, and domesticated. Respondent must be tall, dark complexion, and amiable; tradesman preferred.

TOM SKIRMER, twenty-six, seaman in the Royal Navy, dark complexion, and good looking. Respondent must be about twenty-two, medium height, fair complexion, and fond of home.

JACK MAINSAIL, twenty-eight, a seaman gunner in the Royal Navy. Respondent must be about twenty-four, good tempered, dark complexion, fond of home, and of a loving disposition.

HARRIET, twenty-one, tall, dark hair, light-brown eyes, and of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a tall, dark gentleman, must be of a loving disposition, and fond of home.

JAMES Z. S., thirty, 5ft. 6in., a plumber and gasfitter, dark hair, considered good looking, in receipt of 33s. per week, would like to correspond with a domestic servant, good tempered, and about thirty.

CATHIE, tall, fair, brown hair, gray eyes, and an upholsterer, would like to correspond with a young man about twenty-eight, 5ft. 10in., dark, in receipt one hundred a year, fond of singing and music.

LONELY NELLIE, twenty-two, rather tall, dark-brown hair, hazel eyes, fair, loving, and considered pretty, wishes to marry a tall, dark young man, good looking, and about her own age; a tailor preferred.

HAPPY IF LUCKY, nineteen, 5ft. 7in., light curly hair, blue eyes, good tempered, loving, and faithful. Respondent must be about seventeen, medium height, fair, of a loving disposition, and capable of making a comfortable home.

JENNY, twenty-one, brown hair, laughing eyes, wishes to correspond with some gentleman of respectable connections, tall, and about twenty-five. "Jenny" is good tempered, cheerful and loving, is an orphan not highly accomplished but capable of making a good wife.

HAPPY HARRY, nineteen, 5ft. 7in., dark complexion, hazel eyes, jet black hair, and considered handsome, wishes to meet with a young lady about the same age, light hair, blue eyes, and nice figure, she must also have a little fortune.

ANDREW SMITH and **THOMAS BROWN**. "Andrew Smith," fair, blue eyes, good looking, medium height, fond of music, and dancing, would like to correspond with a young lady, fair, blue eyes, good looking, fond of home and children. "Thomas Brown," dark, glossy hair, good looking, fond of home, and a total abstainer, would like to correspond with a young lady, fair, dark eyes, sunburn hair, good tempered, fond of home and children, and one who would make a loving wife.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED.

HARRY is responded to by—"Minnie," as she thinks he will be the one to suit, for she prefers America to England from experience.

EMMA by—"Oscar," twenty-six, medium height, very dark, dark blue eyes, good temper, and fond of home.

BIRKIE by—"E. A. S.," twenty-six, 5ft. 7in., fair, extremely fond of home, and a grocer's assistant.

PHILIP by—"Ettie B.," light-brown hair, dark eyes, fair complexion, fond of home and children.

BOB by—"E. C.," tall, fair, of prepossessing appearance and domesticated.

LUCKY M. by—"E. M. A.," twenty-seven, dark, with a nice little business of his own.

GEORGE S. by—"Dolly Varden," twenty-two, medium height, dark, and very good looking.

JULIA by—"J. C.," twenty-two, a mechanic, tall, dark, thinks he could make her happy.

MARY by—"M. F.," twenty-one, tall, fair, handsome, in a good situation, and able to keep a wife respectably.

LOVING TOM by—"Rosebud," nearly twenty-two, good looking, fond of music, brown hair and eyes, and very affectionate.

MINNIE by—"Ronald," who cannot boast of money but is a very respectable mechanic earning good wages, fond of home, loving and steady. "Ronald" is thirty-five, 5ft. 6in., and fair.

VIOLET P. by—"F. J. T.," 5ft. 10in., dark complexion, hazel eyes, black hair, good figure and considered handsome, in possession of a little property, holding position of trust in a large Iron Company in Wales, thinks he suits her in every point of view.

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